

# Gathering for Belonging

*This Gathering has suggestions for introducing sections. Some sections use a timer / clock.*

## Words of the Day

*As people arrive, ask them to write the Words of the Day and put them in the basket.*

I feel a sense of belonging when ...

## Opening

**Chalice Lighting** *“We’ll begin with the chalice lighting.” Ask for a volunteer.*

O light of life,  
Be kindled again in our hearts  
As we meet together  
To celebrate the joy of human community  
Seeking a wholeness that extends beyond ourselves.  
*Samuel A. Trumbore, adapted*

**The Basket** *“Now we’ll read the Words of the Day. I’ll start and pass to the right (left).”*

## Being Together

**Sharing of Joys and Concerns** *“Now we’ll share joys and concerns. I’ll begin and we’ll go around the circle. Will you go next?”*

**Silence, holding each other in support** *“Now a few minutes of silence” (2 or 3 minutes)*

**Shared Readings** *“I’ll start the first Shared Reading. Will you go next?”*

Language, identity, place, home: these are all of a piece – just different elements of belonging and not-belonging. *Jhumpa Lahiri*

Art is my cure to all this madness, sadness and loss of belonging in the world & through it I’ll walk myself home. *Nikki Rowe*

I didn’t belong as a kid, and that always bothered me. If only I’d known that one day my differentness would be an asset, then my early life would have been much easier. *Bette Midler*

I do not belong anywhere. I have an accent in every language I speak. *Sholeh Wolpé*

The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us, and the light goes out. *James Baldwin*

The only true belonging is the courage to stand alone and belong to ourselves. *Azriel ReShel*

When you know and respect your Inner Nature, you know where you belong. You also know where you don't belong. *Benjamin Hoff*

Please accept my resignation. I don't want to belong to any club that will accept me as a member.  
*Groucho Marx*

You can't build a society purely on interests, you need a sense of belonging.  
*Valery Giscard d'Estaing*

The natural world is the larger sacred community to which we belong. To be alienated from this community is to become destitute in all that makes us human. To damage this community is to diminish our own existence. *Thomas Berry*

## Deep Listening and Sharing

**Round 1. Deep Sharing.** *“Now we share reflections on Belonging and the preparation.” Begin, or if you're not ready, ask who can go first.*

**Round 2. Responses and Comments.** *After all have shared or passed, check the time. Say “We have about \_\_ minutes for a 2nd round.” Begin your response or ask who can start.*

## Closing

**Closing Circle** *“We'll go around the circle and say a word or sentence about what we are taking away from the session. I'll go first, and would you be willing to go next?”*

**Chalice** *“We will extinguish the chalice.” Read in unison or ask for a volunteer.*

We extinguish this flame and we remember the warmth of our community, the light of our wisdom, the generosity of our sharing. We keep these in our heart until we meet again.

**Song/Chime** *Ask for a volunteer.*

## Announcements

### The Covenant

#### I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to let the facilitator know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share responsibility for good process by watching how much time I take to speak, noticing what is going on for others, and considering problems if they occur
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, giving advice, or advocating a specific view
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn and to stay on the “I-message.”