

## **Gathering for Beloved Community** (Feb theme) – **Stories of Difference**

*There are suggestions for Zoom sessions – speaking in turns, muting, and using Chat for the Words of the Day. Some sections use a timer / clock.*

**When you join the meeting** *Facilitators – do these for yourself first and help others.*

- Check that you are unmuted and have video, if you're using video. Check your volume.
- Make sure your picture box shows your "name tag." Use Rename to change if necessary.
- Make sure you have a copy of the Gathering available.
- **Words of the Day.** Use Chat to write the Words of the Day. Write "A time when I experienced a community that valued differences was ..." and then complete the sentence.

**Chalice Lighting** "We'll begin by lighting the chalice." *Ask for a volunteer to read.*

Each of us brings a separate truth here,  
We bring the truth of our own life, our own story.  
We don't come as empty vessels ...  
But rather we come as full people – people who have our own story and our own truth.  
All manner of people are here: needy ... joyful ... frightened ... anxious ... bored ...  
May we all recognize the truth and the story in everyone's life.  
And may we hear and honor the truths that we all bring as we gather together.  
Together we have truths.  
Together we have a story.  
Together we are a community.  
*Penny Hackett-Evans, adapted*

**Words of the Day** "Now we'll read the Words of the Day from the Chat box." *People can't see Chat written before they join, so you might read these yourself or ask people to read their own.*

**Sharing of Joys and Concerns** "We'll share joys and concerns." *Begin, and then either call on people or ask them to "chain" to the next person. Make sure everyone has an opportunity.*

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

**Shared Readings** "I'll start the first Shared Reading." *Begin, and then either call on people or ask them to "chain" to the next person. Make sure everyone has an opportunity to read.*

The love of our neighbor in all its fullness simply means being able to say, "What are you going through?" *Simone Weil*

If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together. *Attributed to aboriginal rights activist Lilla Watson*

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*

You have to tell the whole truth, the good and the bad, maybe some things that are uncomfortable for some people. *John Lewis*

Everyone is kneaded out of the same dough but not baked in the same oven. *Yiddish Proverb*

I know there is strength in the differences between us. I know there is comfort where we overlap.  
*Ani DiFranco, Overlap*

Nothing about us, without us, is for us. *Slogan from the disability movement in South Africa*

He drew a circle that shut me out – Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But Love and I had the wit to win: We drew a circle that took him in!  
*Edwin Markham*

The peace I am thinking of is the dance of an open mind when it engages another equally open one.  
*Toni Morrison*

Only when we have the courage to tell the truth about our old stories will the new stories arrive to guide us. *Naomi Klein*

## **Deep Listening and Sharing**

**Round 1. Deep Sharing.** “Now we share reflections on Beloved Community and the preparation.”  
*Note the time available for each person and ask people to mute or remain quiet for each speaker.*

*Go first to model. Then ask people to raise their hand if they’re ready to go next. Assist with un-muting if needed. Make sure everyone has an opportunity.*

**Round 2. Responses and Comments.** *Note how much time is available for Round 2. People can unmute for freer exchange. Go first to model for the group.*

**Closing Circle** “In a few words, share what you will take away from this session.” *Begin, and then either call on people or “chain.” Make sure everyone has an opportunity.*

**Chalice** “We will extinguish the chalice.” *Ask for a volunteer to read.*

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.

## **Bell or Chime**

### **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.”