

Gathering for Opening to Joy (December theme)

There are video session suggestions – speaking in turns, using Chat. Some sections use a timer / clock.

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

- Check your volume and video, if you are using video. Check your “name tag.”
- Make sure you have a copy of the Gathering available.
- **Words of the Day.** Complete this sentence:
“An activity or experience that often brings me joy is ...”

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

May the stars carry your sadness away,
May the flowers fill your heart with beauty,
May hope forever wipe away your tears,
And, above all, may silence make you strong.
Chief Dan George, Tsleil-Waututh First Nation

Words of the Day “Now we’ll share the Words of the Day.” *If you’re using Chat, people can’t see chat written before they joined, so the facilitator can read. Or people can 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.*

I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy. *Rabindranath Tagore*

People from a planet without flowers would think we must be mad with joy the whole time to have such things about us. *Iris Murdoch*

An infinite question is often destroyed by finite answers. To define everything is to annihilate much that gives us laughter and joy. *Madeleine L’Engle, A Circle of Quiet*

There was still no likelihood that we could make a living from dance. We were doing it because we loved it ... We realized how full we felt; we were surrounded by music and dancing and joy.
Alvin Ailey

Your pain is a school unto itself – and your joy a lovely temple.
Aberjhani, The River of Winged Dreams

Joy doesn’t ever leave, you know. It’s always with you. And one day you’ll find it again.
Louise Penny, Bury Your Dead

May we all soon go about as our real selves and take joy in it, saying, yes, yes, to whatever we are.
Carol Emshwiller, Carmen Dog

Find a place inside where there's joy, and the joy will burn out the pain. *Joseph Campbell*

Once you can open yourself to joy, you feel as if you've transformed your sadness into illumination, which is really all that art is. *Sandra Cisneros*

I want to see people design their paradigms of joy, rather than try to squeeze themselves into someone else's paradigm. *La Marr Bruce*

Deep Listening and Sharing

Round 1. Deep Sharing. "Now we share reflections on opening to joy." *Note the time available for each person. Go first to model. 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 "We're going to say a word or sentence about what we are taking away from the session." *Begin, and then either call on people or use "chaining."*

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."