

## Spiritual Deepening Circles: April – Interdependent web

### Session 1

3Arriving	10 min	10 minutes before starting time
Singing	2 min	Gathered Here <b>Light the chalice</b>
On our hearts	5 min	Each person can say if something is on their heart tonight. Limit 1-2 sentences This is not a time for extended check-in
Gathering	3 min	Pandemic by Lynn Ungar
Connecting Go round	5 min	Propose this question, then one minute of silence. Who do you belong to? 1-2 sentences
Reading	5 min	From Douglas Steere
Activity Whose are you?	10 min	Read the instructions from the paper, respond to any questions
Sharing	45 min	Popcorn style, time limits controlled by facilitators, no dialogue, questions or comments
Silence	1 min	May use bell or sound (or 12 deep breaths)
Responding	10-15 min	Second opportunity for sharing, responding to others, no questions or dialogue. No one speaks twice before everyone who wants to, speaks once.
Take Away	10 min	<b>Go around – one or two words</b> -one thing that you will take away from tonight’s session in a few words. For example: what moved you or what insights did you have.
Closing Reading	3 min	Gloria by Barbara Pescan
Business	10 min	<b>Discuss</b> – how and when will the circle end? Second session in May? Wait till we can be back in person together?
Singing	2 min	Trust the Light Within Your Heart  <b>Extinguish the chalice</b>

**April – Interdependent web  
Session 1 Gathering reading  
Pandemic**

What if you thought of it  
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—  
the most sacred of times?  
Cease from travel.  
Cease from buying and selling.  
Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world  
different than it is.  
Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.  
Center down.

And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)  
Know that our lives  
are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has come clear.)  
Do not reach out your hands.  
Reach out your heart.  
Reach out your words.  
Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—  
for better or for worse,  
in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.

—Lynn Ungar 3/11/20

**April – Interdependent Web**

## Session 1 reading

Douglas Steere, a Quaker teacher, says that the ancient question, "What am I?" inevitably leads to a deeper one, "Whose am I?" – because there is no identity outside of relationships. You can't be a person by yourself. To ask "Whose Am I?" is to extend the questions far beyond the little self-absorbed self, and wonder: Who needs you? Who loves you? To whom are you accountable? To whom do you answer? Whose life is altered by your choices? With whose life, whose lives, is your own all bound up, inextricably, in obvious or invisible ways?

So, whose are we? Whose are we as we dream, as we fail, as we dream anew? Whose are we as we grow, as we live our daily lives, as we encounter grave challenges of health and fiscal wellbeing, as we wonder what the future will bring? Whose are we as we raise our children, as we release them into the world, as we mourn those we love who die, as we ourselves face the fact of our own mortality? Whose are we in a world that seems upside down, filled with violence and depravation and oppression? Whose are we in world that is at the same time brimming with beauty, potential, freedom, and love?

**April – Interdependent web**  
**Session 1 Activity – Whose are you?**

**To whom or what are you accountable?**

Make a list as an answer to the questions above.

Let it be a brainstorm - don't think too hard, or question what comes up for you.

Once you have made your list consider the following questions for sharing time:

- What does it mean to be accountable to someone or something?
- What do you think about the number of items on your list?
- Is there anything you would add, now that you have time to reflect?  
Anything you would take away?

**April – Interdependent web  
Session 1 Closing Reading**

**Barbara Pescan**

**Gloria**

*The tenacity of Earth and its creatures.*

**Kyrie eleison**

*These children who will go on to save what we cannot.*

**Baruch ata Adonai**

*The ordinary tenacity of plans and of people.*

**Om**

*The center of the universe which is everywhere,  
Not the least place in the human heart.*

**Alleluia**

*Love that survives anger, and winter, and despair,  
And sorrow, and even death.*

**Shalom**

*Love that persists.*

**Nam myo-ho renge kyo**

*Calm that is the seed in the dark.*

**Amen**

*For endings that are beginnings, for beginnings that are endings.*

**Alleluia**

*For the circle, the spiral, the web, the egg, the orbit, the center, the seed,  
the flower, the fruit, the opening, the death, the release, the seed.*

**Amen**

*We are going on.*

**Amen**

*It is going on.*

**Amen**

*Blessed be.*

## Spiritual Deepening Circles: April – Interdependent web

### Session 2

Arriving	10 min Before start time	Greet each person
Singing	2 min	Gathered Here <b>Light the chalice</b>
On our hearts	5 min	Each person can say if something is on their heart tonight. Limit 1-2 sentences This is not a time for extended check-in
Gathering	3 min	Web: Denise Levertov
Connecting Go round	5 min	Propose this question, then one minute of silence. Who are you connected to? 1-2 sentences
Reading		The sunflower and the Sparrow
Activity Drawing your web	15 min	<i>Screen share the instructions for the Activity. Check to see if everyone has paper and pen or pens. Read through the instructions. Ask if there are questions. Then mute everyone. Give them ten minutes for working on the activity and then check to see if anyone needs more time.</i>
Sharing	60 -75 min	Popcorn style, start with one minute of shared silence. <b>Begin with a reminder of the covenant.</b>
Silence	2 min	May use bell or sound, timer or 12 deep breaths
Responding	10 -15 min	(time permitting) Second opportunity for sharing, responding to others. Remind them to focus on their own feelings and experience – no questions or criticisms of others.
Silence	2 min	May use bell or sound, timer or 12 deep breaths
Take Away	5 min	<b>Go around – one or two words</b> -one thing that you will take away from tonight’s session in a few words. For example: what moved you or what insights did you have.
Closing	3 min	We are not alone. Michael DeVernon Boblett
Business	3 min	Reminder of the covenant; next meeting time. <b>Make sure to collect all images and return them to room 9.</b>
Singing	2 min	<b>Trust the Light Within Your Heart   Extinguish the chalice</b>

**April – Interdependent web**  
**Session 2 Opening reading**

**Web**

**By Denise Levertov**

Intricate and untraceable  
weaving and interweaving,  
dark strand with light:

designed, beyond  
all spiderly contrivance,  
to link, not to entrap:

elation, grief, joy, contrition, entwined;

shaking, changing,

forever

forming,

transforming:

all praise,

all praise to the

great web.

**April – Interdependent web**  
**Session 2 reading**

**The Sunflower and the Sparrow**

Between an old wooden chest and a rusty washing-machine drum a little sunflower grew. She was surrounded by rubbish and dereliction. She was the only flower for miles around. Why the sunflower should be growing there, of all places, no one knew.

The flower was often sad, and at night, she would dream of lush meadows, of fields of bright flowers where the butterflies flew around her.

One day a bedraggled little sparrow came and perched in front of her and gazed at her, his beak hanging open.

‘How beautiful you are,’ he chirped. ‘Really beautiful.’

‘I’m not,’ retorted the sunflower sadly. ‘You should see my sisters. They’re ten times my size. I’m small and ugly.’

‘For me, you’re the most beautiful of them all,’ piped the sparrow, and flew away.

The bird visited the sunflower every day from then on. And every day, the sunflower grew a little taller, and every day, her flower became a little brighter. They became friends.

But one day the sparrow didn’t come. And the next day he didn’t come. And the next. The sunflower was very worried. Then one morning, when she awoke, she saw the sparrow lying in front of her, his wings outstretched. What a shock it gave her. ‘Are you dead, my little friend? What’s happened?’

Slowly, the bird opened his eyes. ‘For the last few days, I’ve not found anything to eat on the waste tip. Now I haven’t got any strength left. I’ve come to you so that I can die close to you.’

‘No. No!’ cried the sunflower. ‘Wait. Wait just a moment!’ She lowered her heavy flower-head towards him, and a few sunflower seeds fell to the ground. ‘Pick them up, my little friend. They will give you new strength.’ The sparrow cracked open a few of the seeds with his last ounce of energy, and lay still, exhausted.



But the next day, he was already feeling stronger. He wanted to thank the sunflower, but he was devastated when he saw her. Her yellow flower petals had all gone limp, and her leaves hung down lifelessly. 'What's the matter with you, sunflower?' he chirped in his distress.

'Don't be concerned for me,' said the sunflower weakly. 'My time is over. Do you know what? I always thought that my existence was meaningless, here on the waste tip. But now I know that there is a purpose for everything, even though we can't always understand it. Without you, I would have lost my will to live, and without me, you would have lost your life. And look, there are still plenty of sunflower seeds on the ground. Leave a few of them behind, and maybe one day there will be lots of sunflowers here, and lots of bedraggled sparrows will fly around them, like butterflies.'

Retelling of a traditional German story

**Silf, Margaret. One Hundred Wisdom Stories (pp. 165-168). Lion Hudson. Kindle Edition.**

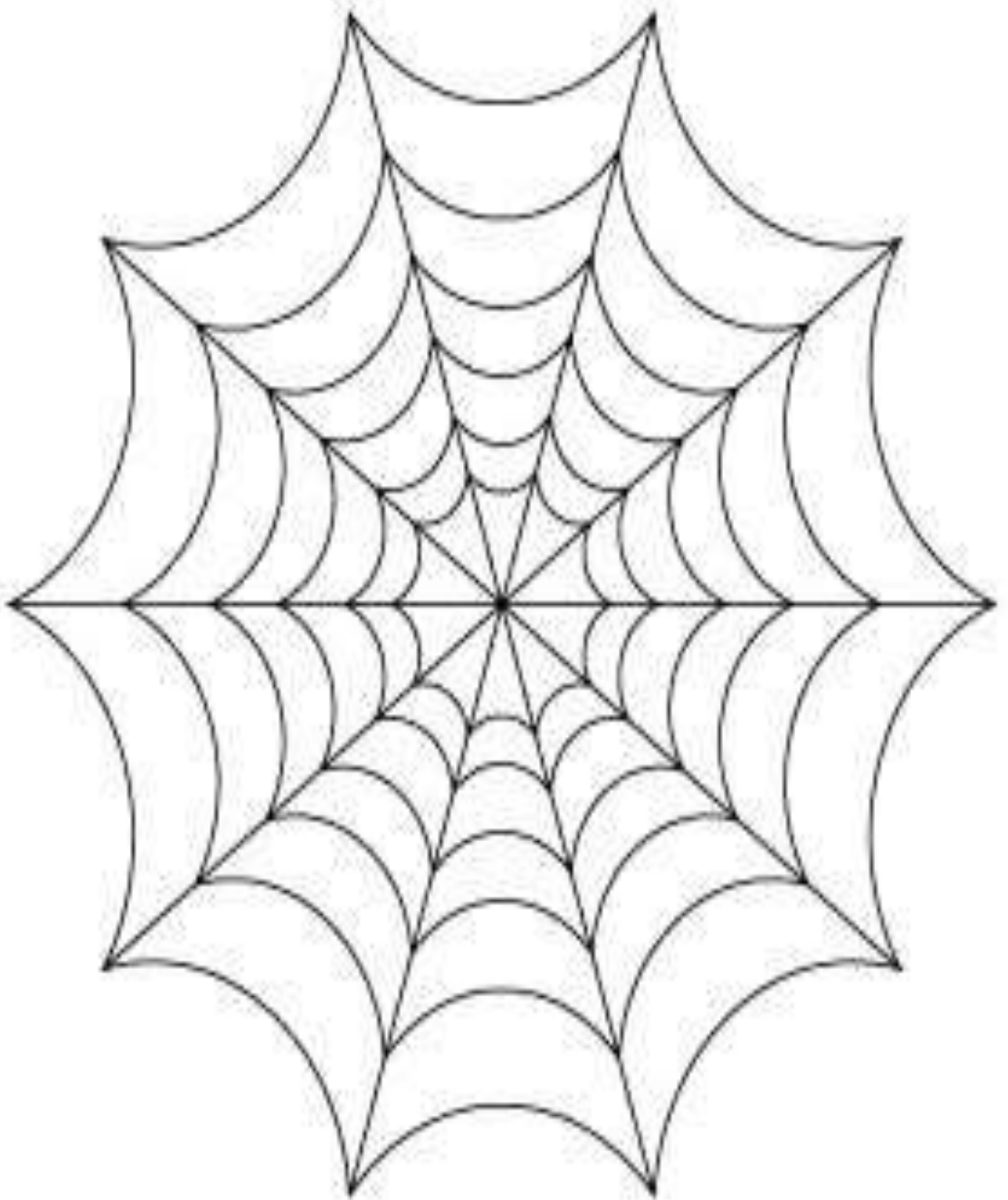
## **April – Interdependent web Session 2 Activity**

### **Drawing your web**

Today we will explore our interconnections by drawing a web including yourself and all people, beings, and things to which you are connected. Take a blank piece of paper and pens or colored pens or pencils. You can make your drawing as simple or elaborate as you choose. For example - you can start by drawing a web and then add the names to that web, or you can start with a blank piece of paper, write down the names and then draw the connecting web. Do whatever feels right to you. If you have downloaded the curriculum, there is a picture of a web you can use as a starting point.

Once you have finished your web, consider the following questions as reflection for sharing time.

- Where are you in this web?
- How big is your web?
- What is included and what is excluded?
- What holds the web together?
- How does interconnectedness affect your everyday life?
- How does your web relate to your list from the first session.



**April – The Interdependent Web**  
**Session 2 Closing reading**

**We are not alone.**

**By Michael DeVernon Boblett**

We are not alone. We are this flame, ancient as the stars, new as the vulnerable spark.

*We are not alone.*

We are this chalice, rimmed by the spiral dance of searching.

*We are not alone.*

We are the light soaring, the shadow deepening, the dance between them.

*We are not alone.*

We are the heirs of the tribes and their fires, the healers and their circles.

*We are not alone.*

We are here. We are here for ourselves. We are here for each other. And...

*We are not alone.*