

Soul Matter Small Groups: October 2020 theme - Deep Listening

Session 1

Arriving	10 min	10 minutes before starting time ; greet each person by name when they arrive
Zoom intro	3 min	Demo basics. See best practices
Gesture check-in	2 min	Each person will say their name and share a facial expression, sound and movement. Other will repeat.
Gathering Reading and chalice lighting	2 min	Read first, then light the chalice
Check In	5 min	Each answer Q: What are you bringing with you tonight that you would like us to know about? What do you need to set down in order to be present?
Silence	1 min	Use timer or 6 deep breaths
Introduction of the covenant	10min	Start by reminding people to raise their hand if they have a comment or questions. Then introduce idea of how they will indicate agreement. (e.g. thumbs up). Give everyone a chance for questions, concerns or comments. Get agreement.
Introductions	15 min	Each person has been asked to bring an object that is significant to them. Remind of covenant of no interruptions. Each person speaks once
Silence	1 min	May use bell or sound, timer or 12 deep breaths
Introduction of theme	3	Quotes and reflection questions
Reflection in silence	3 min	Time for participants to consider reflection questions Post questions on white board or screen share
Sharing	20	Popcorn style, time limits controlled by facilitators, no cross talk, comments questions or advice. Each person speaks once
Silence	1 min	May use bell or sound, timer or 6 deep breaths
Discussion	15	Start with reminder of covenant: Open discussion. No interruptions. No advice ask them to raise their hand if they want to speak.
Take Away	5min	What is one thing that you will take away from the circle tonight? - Go round, 1-2 sentences
Closing reading and chalice extinguishing	2 min	Read first, then extinguish the chalice
Business	2 min	Date, time and place of next meeting. Final comments by facilitators, reminder of confidentiality.

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Session 1

Gathering Reading

Why We're Here

By Erik Walker Wikstrom

Here, today, in this place and with these people,
May we listen so that we can hear;
May we hear so that we can feel;
May we feel so that we can know; and
May we know so that we can change ourselves and this world.
May this chalice we light,
Light our Way.

UUSS Souls Matters Group Covenant

Before our meetings, we agree to:

- Make meetings a priority, including being on time
- Contact the facilitator(s) ahead of time if we are unable to attend

During our meetings, we agree to:

- Practice deep listening, offering each other time to share without interruption.
- Honor the rule of “no fixing, no saving, no advising, no setting each other straight!” during times of discussion.
- Monitor the length and frequency of our own participation so all members have opportunities to speak.
- Speak for ourselves and offer reactions rooted in respect and connected to our own experience
- Periodically revisit, adapt and re-affirm this covenant as a group,

Outside of our meetings, we agree to:

- Respect the privacy of group members by keeping personal sharing confidential.
- As appropriate, reach out to each other in tangible ways to ensure that we are a caring community for one another.
- Participate in the group project to the extent our energy and time allows us to do so
- Bring our conflicts and concerns with the group to the group as a whole or to the facilitator(s) rather than talking with another group member or someone outside the group.
- Ask permission before offering comment about something shared in the group. Be kind if the person says no.

Introduction of the theme

Our soul matters theme for October is deep listening. To help set the stage lets read these quotes:

1. Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you'd have preferred to talk. Doug Larson
2. Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable. David Augsburger
3. One of my patients told me that when she tried to tell her story people often interrupted her to tell her that they once had something just like that happen to them. Subtly her pain became a story about themselves. Eventually she stopped talking to most people. It was just too lonely.” Rachel Naomi Remen
4. Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am. Parker Palmer
5. The older I grow, the more I listen to people who don't talk much. Germain G. Glidden
6. The soul has been given its own ears to hear things the mind does not understand. Rumi
7. The less blame and criticism in our words, the easier it will be for others to hear us. When someone trusts that we're actually interested in understanding them... they can stop defending themselves and just hear what we're saying. Oren Jay Sofer

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Reflection questions

Pick one of these questions to reflect on in preparation for sharing with others.

1. Who listened to you when you most needed it? Who first gave you the gift of deep listening?
2. Why is it so hard to really listen to someone?
3. What if listening is actually an act of love?

Closing reading

Go now in peace

By Barbara Hamilton-Holway

Go now in peace.

Deeply regard each other.

Truly listen to each other.

Speak what each of you must speak.

Be ready in any moment to disarm your own heart,
and always live as if a realm of love had begun.

So be it. Blessed be.

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Session 2

Arriving		10 minutes before starting time ; greet each person by name when they arrive
Zoom intro	3 min	Demo basics; mute when not talking, gallery view etc. Change screen names as necessary.
Gesture check-in	2 min	Say our name Each person will share a facial expression, sound and movement. Other will repeat
Gathering and chalice lighting	3 min	
Check-in	10 min	Each answer Q: What are you bringing with you tonight that you would like us to know about? What do you need to set down in order to be present?
Silence	1 Min	
Theme activity and questions for reflection	10 min	Lectio Divina see instructions Choose a different reader for the 3 readings
Reflection in silence	3 min	Time for participants to consider reflection questions
Sharing	30	Popcorn style, time limits controlled by facilitators, no cross talk, comments questions or advice. Each person speaks once
Silence	1 min	
Discussion	20	Start with reminder of covenant: Open discussion. No interruptions. No advice
Silence	1 min	
Take Away/Appreciation	3 min	one thing that you will take away from tonight's session in a few words or something/someone that you have appreciated.
Closing reading and chalice extinguishing	2 min	Closing reading, extinguishing the chalice
Business	2min	reminder of confidentiality and date of next meeting. Group project (when appropriate)

Session 2

Gathering Reading

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.
We seek to add to our truths and add to our stories.
This room is rich with truth, rich with experience.
All manner of people are here:
needy...joyful...frightened...anxious...bored...
We all bring our truth with us.
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

Theme Activity: Lectio Divina

This exercise invites you to try out a deep listening technique developed by our Christian siblings. It's called Lectio Divina. The basic idea is to deeply listen to a text by reading it multiple times through a different reflective lens each time. You can also think of it as bringing different discernment questions to the text, with each question inviting you to listen to the text in a new way.

For this exercise you will need something to write with and something to write on. We will read the poem three times with a different question for reflection each time. After each reading we will take a pause for you to make some notes on that question.

Before each reading, we will pose the reflection question.

Reading 1 question: what lines stand out for you?

Reading 2 question: what feelings arise as the poem is read?

Reading 3 question: What message does the poem have for you?

Poem for Lectio Divina

Wild Geese by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Reading 1 question: what lines stand out for you?

Reading 2 question: what feelings arise as the poem is read?

Reading 3 question: What message does the poem have for you?

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Session 2

Closing Reading

We receive fragments of holiness,
glimpses of eternity,
brief moments of insight.
Let us gather them up
For the precious gifts that they are
And, renewed by their grace,
Move boldly into the unknown.

Sarah York