

**Joy**  
UU Community Church of Santa Monica  
Heart to Heart Circles  
June 2017

**Welcome and Explanations** 5 minutes

**Chalice Lighting**

**They say a person needs just three things to be truly happy in this world:  
someone to love, something to do, and something to hope for.**

— *Tom Bodett*

**Sharing Silence** 3 minutes

You may wish to bring your attention to your breath, or move a bit until you have found a comfortable seat. If silence is not a familiar experience to you, three minutes may seem long. If you are accustomed to silence, it may seem short.

**On Our Hearts** 15 minutes

Please share any burdens you bring with you today. This is not a check-in, it is a time to share wonderful news or a heavy heart - the major highs and lows of your life you'd like everyone to keep in their hearts or in their prayers for you.

**Covenant and Ground Rules**

Our covenant includes a description of how we want to be with each other, ground rules for our time together, and our expectations for members of the group. This covenant is adapted from *Heart to Heart: Fourteen Gatherings for Reflection and Sharing* by Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins.

I commit myself:

- to give attendance at meetings a real priority knowing that my presence is important to the group;
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit;
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others;
- 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, problem solving, or giving advice;
- and to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

## Readings

*“In my own worst seasons I’ve come back from the colorless world of despair by forcing myself to look hard, for a long time, at a single glorious thing: a flame of red geranium outside my bedroom window. And then another: my daughter in a yellow dress. And another: the perfect outline of a full, dark sphere behind the crescent moon. Until I learned to be in love with my life again. Like a stroke victim retraining new parts of the brain to grasp lost skills, I have taught myself joy, over and over again.”*

- Barbara Kingsolver

“Joy is not just about “feeling good.” It is also about perspective. The spiritual life is, in part, about seeing our lives as being invited to the best party in town. Our challenge is to stay awake to that, to continually pull ourselves back from the mindset that our days are simply a series of challenges and responsibilities. It’s all about balance. We are called to look around and see all that must be done. We are also called to look around and see all that has been given.”

- Soul Matters Minister

It's hard to know when to respond to the seductiveness of the world and when to respond to its challenge. If the world were merely seductive, that would be easy. If it were merely challenging, that would be no problem. But I arise in the morning torn between the desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day.

- E.B. White

Every day, I see or hear something  
that more or less kills me with delight,  
that leaves me like a needle  
in the haystack of light.  
It was what I was born for –  
to look, to listen,  
to lose myself inside this soft world –  
to instruct myself over and over in joy and acclamation.

- *Mary Oliver*

Stay close to those who sing, tell stories, and enjoy life, and whose eyes sparkle with happiness. Because happiness is contagious and will always manage to find a solution, whereas logic can find only an explanation for the mistake made.

- Paulo Coelho

## Questions for consideration:

1. Who helps you see the joy in front of you? And when was the last time you hung out with them?
2. When was the last time you *choose* joy?
3. What needs to be removed from your life in order for joy to return?
4. What helps you keep your joy when times are difficult?
5. How is joy inviting you to return to life?

Sharing 60 minutes

## Reflecting On Our Time Together

Please share anything that would otherwise be unsaid as you leave our time together. Do you wish you had shared something more, less, different? How are you feeling as you leave? Feeling words are ok, such as sad, mad, glad, peaceful, powerful, joyful.

## Closing Words

### Welcome Morning

There is joy  
in all:  
in the hair I brush each morning,  
in the Cannon towel, newly washed,  
that I rub my body with each morning,  
in the chapel of eggs I cook  
each morning,  
in the outcry from the kettle  
that heats my coffee  
each morning,  
in the spoon and the chair  
that cry "hello there, Anne"  
each morning,  
in the godhead of the table  
that I set my silver, plate, cup upon  
each morning.

All this is God,  
right here in my pea-green house  
each morning

and I mean,  
though often forget,  
to give thanks,  
to faint down by the kitchen table  
in a prayer of rejoicing  
as the holy birds at the kitchen  
window  
peck into their marriage of seeds.

So while I think of it,  
let me paint a thank-you on my palm  
for this God, this laughter of the  
morning,  
lest it go unspoken.

The Joy that isn't shared, I've heard,  
dies young.

by Anne Sexton

