

2022 March Chalice Circle: Engaging Conflict

“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting:

Come into this community of your heart where you have been held in love and in comfort; where you have shared your joy and your spirit; where you have asked questions because you felt they needed asking; where you have found friendship and companions; where you have sometimes not agreed—and sometimes not felt comforted, and sometimes not felt heard.

Come into this community of your heart where you have been held in love and in comfort; where you have shared your joy and your spirit; where you have asked questions because you felt they needed asking; where you have found friendship and companions; where you have sometimes not agreed—and sometimes not felt comforted, and sometimes not felt heard.

Song:	All over this land	My brothers and my sisters
If I had a hammer	I'd ring out danger	All over this land
I'd hammer in the morning	I'd ring out a warning	I got a hammer
I'd hammer in the evening	I'd ring out love between	And I've got a bell
All over this land	My brothers and my sisters	And I've got a song to sing
I'd hammer out danger	All over this land	All over this land
I'd hammer out a warning	If I had a song	It's the hammer of justice
I'd hammer out love	I'd sing it in the morning	It's the bell of freedom
between	I'd sing it in the evening	It's the song about love
My brothers and my sisters	All over this world	between
All over this land	I'd sing out danger	My brothers and my sisters
If I had a bell	I'd sing out a warning	All over this land
I'd ring it in the morning	I'd sing out love between	All over this land
I'd ring it in the evening		

Reading 1: ‘No’ is golden. ‘No’ is the kind of power the good witch wields. It’s the way whole, healthy, emotionally evolved people manage to have relationships. - Cheryl Strayed

Check-in: Briefly describe where you are in your life now, and notice what needs to be shared in order to be fully present in our Circle.

Reading 2: Love without justice is not love. Compassion without deeds is not compassion. Faith without action is not faith. And religion without politics is not religion. ... I don’t mean to say that faith can’t offer us moments of soaring hope and profound joy, but these come not in the absence of conflict but in the heart of it. The world is “groaning in travail,” scripture tells us, while we work for something good to be born. ... The intersection of faith and politics, where there's struggle and pain, is the delivery room for the world we seek. That’s where we need to be.

Holy One, when we try to separate our faith and our politics, remind us that neither is meaningful without the other. Give us courage to dwell in that difficult place where they come together... that place where you are surely at work. Amen. -- James Gertmenian

Reading 3: Why engage conflict? Understanding what conflict is helps to make clear why we encourage its engagement. *Conflict, simply stated, is two ideas trying to share space.* The conflict may be one of values, or interests, access to information or interpretation of data, or as often believed, conflict could even be about personalities. People usually only acknowledge the presence of conflict when the behaviors that happen in

response to the conflict become unacceptable. It is worth emphasizing that shouting, fighting, passive aggressive resistance to plans, and similarly disruptive behaviors are NOT conflict. These are most often a response to conflict and the behaviors themselves become secondarily conflict producing. When the behavior becomes unacceptable, conflict management efforts often focus on the behavior not the conflict. We encourage parties to engage the conflict itself and not simply the responses to conflict. In order to engage conflict we must first acknowledge that: *People are not the problem; the problem is the problem.*

When we engage conflict we engage people's ideas even though the ideas are very different from our own. ... When a person's ideas are dismissed out of hand, especially when we fail to distinguish between people and ideas as the source of conflict, then their experiences, hopes, values, and ways of being are also dismissed. When we choose not to engage conflict we often devalue the person. ...

When people have ideas that are drastically different from our own, this presents a great learning opportunity. It is very likely that their world viewing, their experience, their information, and their interests are also demonstrably different from ours. Taking time to learn about the constellation of information, ideas and experiences that produce distinct differences might allow us to learn and grow.

God created us for relationship and community. People and relationships are valuable even when they have ideas that are quite challenging to our way of thinking. One way to honor people is to lean in to relationships when we have different ideas, values, and interests that might produce conflict. [Another] is to *engage conflict*: notice that unacceptable behaviors are often in response to differing ideas and develop an attitude of engagement. In conflict situations, do not stop at the point of managing the behavior. Acknowledge the humanity of those who hold different beliefs. *Engage* the ideas. *Engage* the conflict. --[David Anderson Hooker](#)

Questions you might consider:

1. How do you feel about conflict? What does engaging conflict mean to you?
2. Think of a recent conflict you had in a relationship that is important to you. Looking back on the situation, what went well? What did not? What might you have done differently to resolve the conflict?
3. Do your various approaches to conflict (accommodation, avoidance, compromise, collaboration, competition, something else) reflect the value you would assign to the importance of the outcome and the importance of the relationship? If so, how? If not, why not?

Sitting in Silence/Reflection: Take this time to center yourself and consider what you want to share with the group.

Sharing/Deep Listening: Please share your experiences and thoughts about the topic/readings without crosstalk or interruption.

Crosstalk/Additional Thoughts: As time allows, after listening to others, do you have additional thoughts?

Reading 4: When I catch myself not bringing up conflict, I am like, ooh, red flag. It is an atrophy of the relationship—because it's an investment. The willingness to bring conflict to the table, to make yourself vulnerable, shows a faith in your relationship, an investment in a relationship, a belief that your relationship could be better than it is. -- [Amanda Doyle \(episode 7\)](#)

Checkout: Final thoughts & feelings.

Closing Words/Extinguishing the Chalice

May our efforts here fuel the fires of connection in this world. May our individual efforts take us one step closer to creating a world of inherent worth and dignity for every person, beginning right here. Blessed be; may it be so; amen.