

## 2023 December Chalice Circle: Tenderly

### Opening Words and Chalice Lighting adapted from Rev. [Molly Housh Gordan](#)

We gather together this evening  
tenderly—like drops of dew on a leaf of grass

### Song “Sister Says” by Carsie Blanton [https://youtu.be/56d\\_ynzl\\_K8?si=jXX3VSlr9wdYFME6](https://youtu.be/56d_ynzl_K8?si=jXX3VSlr9wdYFME6)

Don't be a stranger  
Try to be a friend  
There ain't any danger  
Lettin' someone in

Sister says to give what you can give  
It's in the shelter of each other that we live

Well I ain't an angel  
But I can make a start  
A little sanctuary  
To resurrect my heart

And sister says the wonders never cease  
It's in the shelter of each other that we know peace

Don't be a stranger  
There ain't no such thing  
We're brothers and sisters  
In the love we bring

Sister says to give what you can give  
It's in the shelter of each other that we live

**Reading 1**      Tenderness is what justice feels like in private - Cornel West

**Check-in:** Without crosstalk or interruption, 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 adapted from Rev. [Leaf Seligman](#)

In a world with so many serrated edges, tenderness offers us a way to meet each other with compassion and care. We begin with a poem by the 13th century German theologian Meister Eckhart translated by Daniel Ladinsky, “Love Does That.”

**All day long a little burro labors, sometimes with heavy loads on her back and sometimes just with worries about things that bother only burros.**

**And worries, as we know, can be more exhausting than physical labor.**

**Once in a while a kind monk comes to her stable and brings a pear, but more than that, he looks into the burro's eyes and touches her ears and for a few seconds the burro is free and even seems to laugh, because love does that.**

## **Love frees.**

Take a moment to bring to being a time when you felt like the burro. Weary, worried perhaps, sore from your labor or an injury to body or spirit.

Just breathe into that moment and feel the tenderness. Feel where the tenderness shows up in your body and exhale and just stay in the moment.

And now bring into being someone in that moment who functioned like the kindly monk. When have you been met with tenderness, offered as gently as the monk who brings the sweetness and nourishment and a soothing gesture. Breathe into how it feels, that bite of fresh pear, the gentlest caress, just feel that in your body and exhale.

Now bring into being a moment when *you* were the kindly monk. When you offered the pear, when you gently met the worried and weary aching tenderness of another with your own. Just breathe into that feeling and exhale.

### **Questions to Consider**

1. Tenderness also describes a sensitivity to pain, for example when a bruise is prodded. What other definitions & connotations does this word have? What does “tenderly” mean to you? What is the opposite of tenderness?
2. When is a time you witnessed someone behaving tenderly? When have you acted with tenderness or been met tenderness? How did it feel?
3. How do you put up walls to guard against tenderness - toward yourself or to others - and how might you begin to let tenderness in?

**Sitting in Silence:** We will sit in silence for 3-5 minutes. Take this time to reflect on the readings, questions, and theme. Center yourself and consider what you want to share with the group.

**Sharing/Deep Listening:** Please share your own experiences and thoughts about the topic and readings with no crosstalk or interruption. Please ensure everyone gets an equal opportunity to share.

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

**Checkout:** What are you taking with you as you leave the circle? How can we support you in the month ahead?

### **Closing Words/Extinguishing the Chalice**

It is a tender teaching we are after —  
an opening of the human heart  
that we might love more of this world,  
and then still more. —Rev. Gretchen Haley