

Milestones Circle: Sharing Our Lives Now – 2024 September

With Rev. Dr. Molly Housh Gordon, facilitator

Welcome & Introductions: The what, who, and why of the Milestones Circle. Older adulthood is a time to take stock of one's journey and to affirm that which is of most importance. It can be a rich time in the lives of adults- a time when we are often open to new learning and discovery, a time of deepening friendships and relationships, a time of theological reflection as we explore questions of meaning and purpose. The Milestones Circle is an open, drop-in small group for older adults to meet, share thoughts and concerns, and receive support and friendship in a UU setting.

As an experiment, we have agreed that if our group exceeds 12 in number we will try splitting into 2 groups for the discussion and coming back together for our sharing of final thoughts. We hope that this move satisfies our goal of allowing enough time for everyone to thoroughly express their personal points of view on the topics.

Our proposed Covenant Statement: *(to be read silently and discussed if there are questions or concerns.)*

- We will use "I" statements when speaking and avoid interrupting others while they are speaking.
- What we say in this Circle will be held in confidence so that we all will feel free to share our truth openly.
- We will listen with compassion and empathy because we understand that all human beings are fallible and need the kindness offered in friendship.
- We acknowledge the right to pass or not share, when that feels appropriate.

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting: With mounds of greenery, the brightest ornaments, we bring high summer to our rooms, as if to spite the somberness of winter to come. Let us make a holiday today, the rituals varied as the hopes of humanity. With these words, we light our chalice. (modified from the words of Margaret Starkey)

Song: Hymn #346 Come Sing a Song With Me

Check-in: Participants are invited, as we go around our circle, to state your name and to share something important in your life currently. Because we are a community of care, also indicate if there is anything that you might expressly need from this group to address what you have shared. *We might need to take a significant amount of time in our check in with the goal of becoming known and knowing our fellow participants. (approx 20 -30 minutes)*

Following the check in, if necessary, the group will split into two for today's discussion.

Today's topic: Maintaining sanity during the political season/ General mental health issues

Reading: From Our Minister

It is a fearful time in the world, in this country, in this ever-weakening democracy. I am reminded of the words of trauma expert Gabor Maté: "Safety is not the absence of threat; it is the presence of connection."

It seems clear that tensions will only continue to heighten in our public life between now and the Presidential election in November. It is natural for us to be feeling anxious and even afraid.

Amid all of the sound and fury, the most grounding thing we can do is lean into connection, remembering that whatever happens, our safety and thriving comes most powerfully from each other.

When you feel yourself getting activated, think about how connection can soothe you: can you spend centering time with a loved one, with a pet, with the earth, with your congregation or other communities, and/or with your own deepest self?

From that connected place, we can turn away from the noise and turn back to building the resilient, loving, liberationist communities that know and live the truth that all of us need all of us to make it.

Questions: You are invited during this time to verbalize the questions in your heart and mind that may spark discussion on our monthly theme. Participants may speak in no particular order. *The facilitator or another willing member will attempt to record your questions for our consideration. (approx. 10-15 minutes)*

Quiet Reflection: Take a few minutes in silence to reflect on the reading, and the questions to consider which have been expressed. You might use the back side of this paper to jot down your thoughts. (2-5 minutes)

Sharing/Listening round our Circle We will first go around our Circle to ensure that everyone gets an equal opportunity to speak. *Please be mindful to allow time for everyone to share. (approx. 20 minutes)*

Open Discussion/reflections We will share additional thoughts on our theme, this time in no particular order. (approx 10 minutes)

Returning together: *We invite each group to provide a summation from your separate discussions. (approx. 10 minutes)*

Possible further information? As time allows, please share your recommendations of books, movies, writers, websites, etc. that offer more on today's theme.

Closing Words and Extinguishing the Chalice:

Keep alert, stand firm in your faith; be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love. ~1 Corinthians 16