

# Gathering for Getting to Know Each Other

## Words of the Day

I was drawn to a covenant group because ...

## Chalice Lighting

We light this chalice to shine on our time together. In its light we celebrate the relationships and understanding we are creating in this place and time. May our sharing be deep. (*Light chalice*)

## The Basket

## Introductions

## Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support

## Business

## The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to let the facilitator know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share with the facilitator the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time
- 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, giving advice, or advocating a specific view
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn and to stay on the “I-message.”

## Shared Readings

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. This room is rich with truth, rich with experience.

*Penny Hackett-Evans*

It is by speaking and listening to each other that out of the darkness of our separate mysteries is brought to light the truth of who we are. *Frederick Buechner*

I suspect that the most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention ... When people are talking, there's no need to do anything but receive them. *Rachel Naomi Remen*

## Introducing the Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

In a talk on “Living Together in Harmony,” Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh (pronounced “Tik Nyat Hawn”) discusses deep listening. Here are his words.

We have begun to learn about a method of deep listening. As we already know, we have to practice before we can listen deeply.

Sometimes we can also translate “deep listening” as compassionate listening, that is, to listen with compassion, or to listen with love.

We hear with one aim only; we don’t listen in order to criticize, to blame, to correct the person who is speaking or to condemn the person.

We only listen with one aim, that is to relieve the suffering of the one we are listening to.

We have to sit still, we have to sit with inner freedom, and we have to be one hundred percent present, body and mind, listening so the other can relieve his or her suffering ...

If we can sit for an hour, that is a golden hour. That hour is an hour which can heal and transform.

~ ~ ~

**Rounds of Sharing.** There are two rounds of sharing. During each round, one person speaks at a time. The job of listeners is to listen deeply keeping their hearts open. The speakers share from the heart as deeply as they are willing.

**Round 1:** Each person in the group takes five to six minutes to reflect aloud on the preparation materials about the topic. The leader starts. Everyone who wants to speak gets one turn, in any order they choose. Anyone may pass. At the conclusion of a participant’s comments, the group leader may say thank you, but there is no further discussion, just a few breaths of silence. Then the next person speaks.

**Round 2:** This is an opportunity to share additional thoughts as well as thoughts prompted by what others have shared. The speaker still focuses on their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences – this is not about debating issues. Everyone who wants to speak gets a turn, in whatever order they choose, until the time runs out. It’s everybody’s responsibility to ensure that all who want to speak get a chance and that no one is dominating.

## Sharing

## Closing Circle

## Extinguishing the Chalice

We extinguish this flame and we remember the warmth of our community, the light of our wisdom, the generosity of our sharing. We keep these in our heart until we meet again. (*Extinguish the chalice.*)

## Song/Chime

## Announcements