

Gathering for Common Ground

This Gathering has suggestions for introducing sections. Some sections use a timer / clock.

Words of the Day

As people arrive, ask them to write the Words of the Day and put them in the basket.

The issue on which I would like to find common ground is ...

Opening

Chalice Lighting *“We’ll begin with the chalice lighting.” Ask for a volunteer.*

In these hard times, let us look first to the response of love.

In the midst of challenge, may our chalice flame bear witness to the inherent worth and dignity of every human being.

In the midst of uncertainty, may our chalice be a beacon of encouragement, that our values may guide our choices.

Let us look first to the response of love.

Maureen Killoran, “Let Us Look First To the Response of Love”

The Basket *“Now we’ll read the Words of the Day. I’ll start, and pass it along to the right (left).”*

Being Together

Sharing of Joys and Concerns *“We’ll share joys and concerns. I’ll begin. Will you go next?”*

Silence, holding each other in support *“Now a few minutes of silence.” (2 or 3 minutes)*

Review 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 responsibility for good process by watching how much time I take to speak, noticing what is going on for others, and considering problems if they occur
- 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 *“I’ll start the first Shared Reading. Will you go next?”*

I don’t like that man. I’m going to have to get to know him better. *Abraham Lincoln*

No matter what message you are about to deliver somewhere, whether it is holding out a hand of friendship, or making clear that you disapprove of something, is the fact that the person sitting across the table is a human being, so the goal is to always establish common ground. *Madeleine Albright*

The fastest way to learn is to discover a person or group which reaches totally different conclusions than your own when looking at the same reality. *Robert Theobald*

The conversations most worth having are with intelligent people with whom one disagrees. Preaching to the choir benefits neither the choir nor the preacher. *Arthur O. Armstrong*

Grant us the ability to find joy and strength
not in the strident call to arms
but in reaching out our arms
to grasp our fellow creatures
in the striving for justice and truth.

Jewish Prayer from Come Into the Circle by Michelle Richards

All of us share this world for but a brief moment in time. The question is whether we spend that time focused on what pushes us apart, or whether we commit ourselves to an effort – a sustained effort – to find common ground, to focus on the future we seek for our children, and to respect the dignity of all human beings. *Barack Obama*

Our similarities bring us to a common ground; our differences allow us to be fascinated by each other. *Tom Robbins*

The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another. *Thomas Merton*

Anyway, stories bring us together to find common ground, to find our way through life together, or just to entertain us, and I am just thrilled to be a part of that process. *Dorothea Benton Frank*

Solidarity does not assume that our struggles are the same struggles, or that our pain is the same pain, or that our hope is for the same future. Solidarity involves commitment, and work, as well as the recognition that even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground. *Sara Ahmed*

Deep Listening and Sharing

Round 1. Deep Sharing. *“Now we share reflections on Common Ground and the preparation.”*
Begin, or if you’re not ready, ask who can go first.

Round 2. Responses and Comments. *After all have shared or passed, check the time. Say “We have about __ minutes for a 2nd round.” Begin your response or ask who can start.*

Closing

Closing Circle *“We’ll go around the circle and say a word or sentence about what we are taking away from the session. I’ll go first, and would you be willing to go next?”*

Chalice *“Now we extinguish the chalice.” Read in unison or ask for a volunteer.*

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.

Song/Chime *Ask for a volunteer.*

Announcements