

#MeToo Women's Reflection Circles Overview

As I write this, the hearing for Brett Kavanaugh' appointment to the Supreme Court happened last week and we held our first Women's Reflection Circle yesterday. When we began planning for these circles last Spring, a colleague asked me if this issue would still be relevant in the Fall. I responded it would likely be, and most certainly would be for women. Here we are once again.

Background

This four-session curriculum is to offer the opportunity for women to gather and reflect on the patriarchy and how it shows up in our lives. It came out of a service that we offered on December 10, 2017 as the #MeToo movement was beginning. The service was titled "I Believe You" and was presented by the women on staff at First Unitarian. If you are interested in the hearing or reading the homilies from that service, you can find them here:

<https://www.firstunitarianportland.org/services/12345-i-believe-you-23456789/>

After each service, we held Reflection Circles for those who wanted to talk. One circle was for those who identified as women, one for those who identified as men, and one for those who chose not to identify as gender binary. A total of 50 women came to the circles, many asking for more opportunities to talk.

In the Spring, two congregants, one a spiritual director and one a former counselor, offered a class titled "Writing Our #MeToo Stories." Their experience informed our planning and development of this curriculum.

In April I gathered a group of women congregants willing to work on creating and forming follow-up groups. The curriculum here is the result of our work.

With a deep gratitude, these are the women who worked together and with me:

Alice Ringquist

Ellen Howard

Leslie Comnes

Linda Fitzgerald

Maxine Lathrop

Patty Clement

Ronnie-Gail Emden

Sheryl Eldene

Our plan had been to field test these sessions, revise as needed, and then share if there was interest. In light of recent events, we are offering the sessions in their draft form with the hope that they will be of use. We welcome your feedback as we collect ours.

Theology and Philosophy

As part of the formation of our working group and throughout our work together, we returned to one central question: What is it that church and our faith community can offer on this issue and in this moment?

As is often the case in our tradition, we had more clarity about what we were not offering (e.g. therapy) and took more time to clarify what we were offering. We landed on offering an opportunity for women to gather in the support of their faith community to explore patriarchy, how it shows up in our lives and in our society, and how we want to be in this world. Learning, reflection, and action.

One topic that we wrestled with was forgiveness. This was in part because it is a difficult topic in general and specifically difficult in our faith tradition. We also didn't want to force or presume forgiveness, especially in a time when anger is so appropriate and needed for action that can promote change. We elected not to address forgiveness, with the hope that it may come....someday.

Preparation

A few words about the process of selecting members of this work group. There were several women who offered to work on follow-up after the December service. For recruiting beyond that I turned to the church Lay Ministry members and was grateful to receive several volunteers.

In terms of background, our workgroup members include counselors and therapists, an OB/GYN physician, several writers, several experienced Lay Ministers, a spiritual director, and several women with small group leadership experience.

A key part of our preparation was to take the time for each of us to tell our #MeToo stories. We did this after we had been together in the planning process for a while and had built trust between us. We recommend this step as you prepare to offer these sessions, or something like it.

I believe our storytelling was important for several reasons: it gave each of us the chance to have our story heard and held, so we could be present to hear the stories of others; it gave us each the chance to hear the wide range of experiences offered and to practice listening deeply; it allowed us to get to know each other at a deeper level. We believed this knowing was especially important for the co-facilitator pairs as they worked together and wanted to care for each other as well as the group participants.

Throughout this process, we shared our hopes and our fears. The Welcome letter that you will see in this packet is a result of sharing and addressing some of our fears and concerns.

Minister's Role

Throughout this process, I served as the recruiter of facilitators, convener of our joint work sessions (the co-facilitators regularly worked as teams), and holder of the space for this work to happen. With skilled facilitators, I elected not to lead a group, and plan to be the behind-the-scenes support for the facilitators. I will be available to follow-up for pastoral care with group participants as needed. I will also be available for a debrief with facilitators after each session, and will convene a debrief for all of us when all of the groups are done.

I have also been asked for names of local counselors who address gender-based abuse and violence, so keep a list handy.

Logistics

We have created four structured sessions intended to last about two hours each.

What you will find here is a Welcome letter, the contents of sessions 1, 2, 3 and 4, and a handout of calming techniques.

We have created teams of two women co-facilitators for each group.

This Fall we are offering three groups, one on Sunday afternoon, one on a weekday, and one on a weekday evening. The first group began September 30 and the last group will be on November 20.

We have capped each group at eight participants, not counting the co-facilitators.

We left open the possibility that the groups might want to continue, and offer this option as part of session 4. The facilitators were asked to decide if they would want to be part of an on-going group or not; their choice.

Our Lay Ministry group had gathered a list of local resources for those who have experienced gender-based harassment, abuse and violence. We will have these available for each group.

There are many stories to be told. We hope this may help those stories find their way into the light of community. Please feel free to reach out if we can support you. We do not do this work alone.

Blessings on who you are and what you do.

Rev. Mary Gear

Acting Assistant Minister, First Unitarian-Portland

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503-228-6389 x132

Welcome Letter to be e-mailed from Rev. Mary to Women's Reflection Circle participants prior to the first meeting.

Dear [Participant] -

Welcome! You are registered in the #MeToo Women's Reflection Circle, meeting [dates] at [times]. The facilitators (below) and I have been working together to plan the series, and we hope that it will be a meaningful experience for you.

Please look over the following information and **let me know right away that you have received it by replying to this email**. Also, please do not hesitate to contact me or one of the facilitators if you have any questions or concerns.

About the series:

- The reflection circles came about as one response to our church's #MeToo-focused service last year. The circles are designed to be intimate, with no more than 8 participants per group.
- **What it is:** This series is meant to be a time for women to share and listen to one another's stories, to offer support and hope in facing this topic, and to examine it within the embrace of our church community.
- **What it isn't:** This is not a therapy group. The goal is not to "fix" you or others. If you feel that you need more support than this series can provide, please contact me so that I may help point you to other resources.
- **Commitment:** To ensure a safe space for every participant to both receive from and contribute to the group, we ask that you plan on attending all four meetings in the series and that you hold the others' sharing in confidence. If you anticipate a problem committing to this, please let me know as soon as possible so that I can help you decide whether to remain in the group.
- **Childcare:** Childcare will be provided on request. If you would like childcare for this series, please reply with the number and ages of your children.
- **Bring:** If you would like, please bring a journal or small notebook for writing your reflections.

The facilitators and I look forward to meeting with you.

In faith,

(signed by Rev. Mary with the names and e-mails of the co-facilitators)

Session One – The Patriarchy and Its Effect on Us

Materials for Session

- Chalice
- Match or lighter
- Name tags
- Marking pens
- Coffee/tea and cups
- Snacks (optional)
- Community resource list (from Lay Ministry)
- Lay Ministry cards and brochures
- Chart paper and easel
- Overview of the four session topics on chart paper
- Blank paper and pens (for journaling)
- Kleenex
- Microphone (as needed)

Session Plan

Note: Times listed are suggestions based on the two-hour session. Adjust as appropriate.

Chalice Lighting – 5 minutes

Invite one of the participants to light the chalice. Read the following:

We light this chalice to find inner peace,
love for each other, and faith in ourselves.
So gather around this light of hope
as we share this time together.

Welcome and Introduction – 5 minutes

- Welcome
 - Welcome!
 - Facilitators introduce selves.
- Overview of the Women’s Reflection Circles:
 - The reflection circles came about as one follow-up response to our church’s #MeToo-focused service last year. There are three different circles meeting this fall, which will all follow the same general format and plan.
 - #MeToo is a large umbrella, and we understand that women may be coming to the circles with a wide range of experiences, pains, and hopes.

- Some of you may have participated in the Writing Your #MeToo Stories class that was offered in the winter. We drew on that experience to develop this series, so a few of the discussions, exercises, and readings may seem familiar, but most will be different.
- What it is: This series is meant to be a time for participants to share and listen to one another's stories, to offer support and hope in facing this topic, and to examine it within the embrace of our church community. #MeToo and all that it represents is at heart a spiritual issue that touches each one of us – women and men – and that affects our ability to become our true, whole selves.
- What it isn't: This is not a therapy group. The goal is not to “fix” you or each other. If you find that you need more than this series is able to provide, please let us know so we can help point you to other resources. We've put together a list of community resources that you may find helpful and our church's Lay Ministry program is also available for one-on-one spiritual support. (Hand out or have available community resource guides and Lay Ministry cards and brochures.)
- Encourage participants to make sure to take care of themselves and not to do anything or share anything that they aren't comfortable with.
- An overview of the four session topics (on chart paper):
 - Session 1: What is the patriarchy and how has it affected us?
 - Session 2: Telling our stories and listening
 - Session 3: Holding and Letting Go
 - Session 4: Closing and next steps
- Housekeeping
 - Take breaks as you need them
 - Where bathrooms are located
 - Tea and coffee available
 - Parking (point out that the lot across the street is not free in the evenings or during the week)

Check-in - 10 minutes

- Have participants introduce themselves by stating the name they want to be called and one thing they want the group to know about them.

Covenant/Agreements - 15 minutes

- Introduce the idea of covenant: Our hope is that this group will be a place where each person feels comfortable sharing their truth. In order to make that possible, it will be important that we have a shared understanding of how we want to be with one another. Our church uses the language of covenant, which means commitment or agreement. We are going to create a covenant together to guide

our work in this group. What thoughts do you have about how to make this a safe and spirit-nurturing place for everyone?

- List the group's ideas on chart paper. Help them to express their ideas in short phrases. Suggest any important ones that may be missing, such as:
 - Confidentiality (if necessary, help the group clarify exactly what this means)
 - Compassion
 - Holding each other's truths
 - Compassion to self (self-care)
 - Listening
 - No interruption
 - Judgement free
 - No advice giving
 - It's okay to pass and be quiet
 - Commit to being fully here
 - Keep coming to the group (may want to point out that I may not need to be there, but some else may need me to be there)
- If it seems helpful, assist the group in editing and combining similar ideas. (The most helpful covenants are short and to the point.) Plan to save the covenant to post in the other sessions.

Triggering and Calming Technique (Square Breathing) - 5 minutes

- Introduce triggering and model square breathing:
 - It is possible that the topics we explore today or in the other sessions may trigger an emotional response in you. That response may take many forms, but it will often distract you from focusing on the discussion.
 - One calming technique is called Square Breathing and we will demonstrate it for you now:
 - Breathe in for 4 counts
 - Hold for 2 counts
 - Breathe out for 4 counts
 - Hold for 2 counts
 - (After several square breaths) I invite you to relax your shoulders/arms/wrists/ankles with an out breath.
 - Square breathing is a tool that you can use at any time – both today in our group and in your life. You may do it quietly on your own, without anyone else even knowing. Or, if you think it would be helpful, you may ask us to do the square breathing with the whole group.
 - Over the course of the sessions, we'll introduce a couple of other simple calming techniques.

Reading/Centering - 5 minutes

(We suggest either reading both verses, or just the second verse.)

Gathering of the Waters

It was at a gathering of women
when this gathering of the waters first came to pass.
Women in a second wave of gender self-awareness;
awakening,
 connecting,
 making new meaning,
 shifting the patriarchy.

The solidarity of these women was reflected in the waters each brought,
Waters that became a liquid harmony of each sweet voice and intention.

Today we gather as a community of women in a new wave of gender awareness;
awakening,
 connecting
 making new meaning,
 shifting the patriarchy.

Today, we seek more than solidarity and harmony.

We seek inclusion.

We seek mutuality.

We seek reconciliation.

We seek justice for all people.

Today, may our gathering of the waters reflect the gathering of our collective
courage

In service of the grace and love that is promised by our liberal faith.

(Adapted from "Gathering of the Waters" by Renee Ruchotzke from Worship
Web, <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/invocation/gathering-waters>)

Discussion - 65 minutes

- What is The Patriarchy? - 5 minutes
 - Explain that over the next hour, the group will be exploring the idea of patriarchy and some of the ways it affects us. Point out that it is used in the reading and ask participants what they think the term means, or what it means to them.
 - Share this definition (which we adapted from the London Feminist Network, Wikipedia and YouTube):

Patriarchy means "rule of the father." The patriarchy is a social system where males hold primary power and dominant roles in political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of property. It

- plays out in the social, legal, political, religious, and economic organization of most cultures. Male violence against women is also a feature of the patriarchy.
- Note: This discussion could go on for a long time! Keep it brief as we want participants to have time to dive deeper into the more personal explorations to follow.
 - (optional) Tell participants that after doing some brief journaling, they're going to share with each other a couple of different ways: in pairs for the first experience, and in the whole group for the second experience. Suggest that they see which of these formats they prefer so that you can incorporate their preference in subsequent sessions.
- Memory of Feeling Limited as a Female – 30 minutes
 - Journaling (5 minutes)
 - Point out that this writing exercise is meant to give participants time and space to clarify and organize their thoughts. Assure them that they won't be asked to read their writing, although they may if they want to. Explain that they will be talking in pairs (or in threes, if there's an odd number) about their memory.
 - Invite participants to journal for a few minutes about this question: *What's your first memory of feeling limited as a female?*
 - Discussing in Pairs (10 minutes)
 - Split the group into pairs or threes. Suggest that each person take a few minutes to share with their partner their memory or what their memory stirred up – and then to trade off. Explain that they will be asked to share their partner's story with the whole group.
 - Sharing with the Group (15 minutes)
 - Invite each person to share their partner's story with the whole group.
 - Before going into the next activity, check in with the group about how they are feeling. Ask, "Is there anything else we need to do now before moving on?"
 - Recent Experience of Patriarchy – 30 minutes
 - Journaling (5 minutes)
 - Invite participants to journal for a few minutes about this question: *What's a recent experience you've had of "the patriarchy" (or what you would consider the patriarchy)?*
 - Discussing as a Group (25 minutes)
 - Lead an open discussion about this question. Participants may want to share the experience they journaled on, or they may want to discuss their

experience of patriarchy more generally. They may also want to reflect on how their experience of patriarchy has changed (or not) over time, comparing their thoughts and feelings from their first memory of patriarchy to their recent experience.

- Make sure that everyone who wants to has an opportunity to share.
- (Optional) Check in with the group about which sharing format they preferred – in pairs or in the whole group. (Different people may prefer a different format, which is okay, too.)

Closing Question - 5 minutes

- At about 10 minutes before the group closing time, point out that our time together is about to end. Ask: *Is there anything you need to be ready to leave here?*
- Let participants know that in the next session, they'll each have a chance to tell what they feel is their "MeToo" story or a time they felt disrespected or taken advantage of as a woman. They may wish to share one of the stories they identified today and go more in depth, or to share about something else.
- (Optional) Say that in sharing, you will encourage them to focus their story on how they felt at the time or how they feel now, and less on the particulars of who did what. Suggest that between now and then, they may find it helpful to journal, do art, write poetry, walk, dance, sing or whatever might help them access their feelings or clarify their thinking.
- Remind participants of when the next meeting will be and any other logistics.

Closing Prayer - 5 minutes

- Read the following as a closing prayer:

Truth seeks the light. Our secrets are beginning to breathe fresh air again and are noticing they're not alone. We're unraveling silence because so many of us have determined that our power together is greater than our power alone. Spirit of life and of love, guide us to share our power in faithful ways. Remind us that when we companion one another into truth, we also make you present in our midst.

(Adapted from "The Dynamics of Silence" by Erika A. Hewitt from Worship Web - <https://www.uua.org/braverwiser/dynamics-silence>)

- Allow for a few moments of silence as the group members take in the words of the prayer.
- Blow out the candle (unless it has already been blown out).

Session Two – What is the Story You Would Like to Tell? (Telling Our Stories and Listening)

Materials for Session

- Chalice
- Match or lighter
- Name Tags
- Marking Pens
- Coffee/tea and cups
- Snacks
- Community Resource List From Lay Ministry
- Lay Ministry cards and brochures
- Chart paper and easel
- Overview of the four session topics on chart paper
- Covenants on chart paper from previous session
- Blank paper and pens (for journaling)
- Kleenex

Session Plan

Note: Times are suggested based on the two-hour session. Adjust as appropriate.

Chalice Lighting -5 minutes

Invite one of the participants to light the chalice.

Short reading: Wherever you are is the entry point. -- Kabir

Review Covenant/agreements – 5 minutes

Confidentiality

Compassion

Holding each other's truths

Compassion to self

Listening

 No interruption

 Judgment free

No advice giving

It's ok to pass and be quiet

Commit to being fully here

Keep coming to the group

Any additional items agreed upon last week

Welcome and Check-In (Encourage brief check in. Explain that they will be sharing in depth later) 10 Minutes

Question: Do you have further reflections on our last session that you would like to share?

Guidance to the group on telling our stories – 5 minutes

(Note to Facilitators: There is no time scheduled for journaling. At the end of session #1 please announce and give a head's up that in session #2 we will have an opportunity to share stories.)

As we share our stories, let us give space between one story and the next. As we share our stories you may find that someone else's story will trigger strong reactions in you. It may be similar to your experience. You may want to practice the Square Breathing calming technique we introduced last week. Or it might be helpful to breathe deeply, close your eyes, feel your bottom on the chair and your feet on the ground. If you find that you cannot witness this story, come to one of us and we will go with you to a private space. Signal us and we can leave quietly so as not to disrupt the person talking. Conversely, you may feel this person's story is just so different from your own that you cannot relate. This is the time to practice active, compassionate listening. This is a time to remember to hold that person. This is a time to remain silent. If you feel you need a break after someone's story, please raise your hand. (facilitators may choose to do a calming technique if it appears that the group needs it.)

Everyone's story is valid; no one's story is too trivial or too intense in comparison with someone else's story. Where you are is the entry point.

Sharing/Discussion Telling our Stories – 60 Minutes. (We have planned to do this sharing as one group, rather than to break into pairs or triads. It gives us more ability to monitor and support.) One of the facilitators should keep time to ensure that all have opportunity to share if so desired.

Normalization Question: (Note: Because telling our stories may leave participants vulnerable, we chose a more positive ending question to help people "normalize" before going back out into the world) This is intended to serve as a "check-out" and not something to put on a flip chart. (15 minutes)

Question: What will you do this coming week for self-care to nourish yourself?

Closing reading:

Reading – We Are Whole, Beth Lefever – 5 Minutes

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/175456.shtml>

We are whole, even in the broken places, even where it hurts.

We are whole, even in the broken places, the places where fear impedes our full engagement with life; where self-doubt corrupts our self-love; where shame makes our faces hot and our souls cold.

We are whole, even in those places where perfectionism blunts the joy of full immersion into person, place, activity; where "good enough" does not reside except in our silent longings; where our gaps must be fast-filled with substance, accomplishment, or frenzied activity lest they gape open and disgust.

We are whole where we would doubt our own goodness, richness, fullness and depth, where we would doubt our own significance, our own profoundness.

We are whole, even in our fragility; even where we feel fragmented, alone, insubstantial, insufficient.

We are whole, even as we are in process, even as we stumble, even as we pick ourselves up again, for we are whole. We are whole.

Blow out candle.

Note to facilitators: Be prepared to stay present and available as participants leave.

Session Three–Holding and Letting Go

Materials for Session

- Chalice
- Match or lighter
- Name tags
- Marking pens
- Coffee/tea and cups
- Snacks (optional)
- Community resource list (from Lay Ministry)
- Calming technique handout
- Lay Ministry cards and brochures
- Chart paper and easel
- Overview of the four session topics on chart paper
- The group’s covenants/agreements on chart paper
- Blank paper and pens (for journaling)
- Crayons
- Paper for drawing in a variety of sizes and colors
- Copies of images for drawing
- Index cards
- Kleenex
- Microphone (as needed)

Session Plan

Note: Times listed are suggestions based on a two-hour session. Adjust as appropriate.

Chalice Lighting – 5 minutes

Invite one of the participants to light the chalice. Read the following:

May this flame,
symbol of transformation since time began,
fire our curiosity,
strengthen our wills,
and sustain our courage
as we seek what is good within and around us.

Welcome and Housekeeping – 5 minutes

Remember to take breaks and help yourself to tea and coffee when you need them.

Check-in--10 minutes

How are you? Do you have any thought about our last session that you would like to share?

Review Covenant/Agreements –5 minutes

Another Calming Technique – Grounding, tapping--5 minutes

- Imagine a beautiful place where you feel absolutely safe, can be a real place, or something from a movie or book, or just in your imagination. Some people pick a favorite vacation spot, others like to be under the spirit tree in the movie Avatar, or from a book, like the Secret Garden.
- In your imagination, notice how it feels on your skin to be in that place, what do you hear, what colors get your attention, as you experience this place more and more, allow your breath to be relaxed and natural.
- Now, while staying in that place in your imagination, tap in a rhythm (close to a normal heart beat) on one leg, then the other, or cross your arms and tap your upper arms.
- This can be used to relax before sleep, get your mind back to a calm place after recounting or remembering any difficult situation.

Reading/Centering –5 minutes

...none of us ever really walks in another's shoes or knows the innermost rooms of a person's heart. None of us truly knows the lonely places of another's journey. Therefore, let us be gentle with one another. Let us listen more than we speak and accept more than we judge. Let our open outstretched hands reach and touch that we may walk along together for a little while in friendship and in trust.

Adapted from "The Unaccompanied Mile" by Elizabeth Tarbox

Or: *(use just stanza 2 or use both)*

Spirit of Life and of Love,

We come to this place carrying so much in our hearts.

Around us we hear the laments of a broken world,

Torn by fire, storm and strife,

Crying, "I too have suffered.

I too have been hurt and oppressed by power, by pain, by loss and by neglect."

We open our ears and lift up the words of all who join in this song:

"Me, too."

Spirit, comfort us.

Descend around us as a cloud of peace and compassion,

Abide with us in our mourning.

Help us to gather ourselves,
To face each day with bravery, or equanimity, or even just to face it at all.
Help make each movement lighter, less leaden.
Give us the grace to once again give thanks,
And the strength to be kind to ourselves over and over.
One day, may our cries of shared sorrow give way to songs of joy.
May we sing, "I too am healing my broken heart.
I too see the faces of justice and mercy.
I too am filled with light, love, and compassion.
"Me, too."

Blessed be and amen.

Adapted from A Prayer for "Me, Too" By Molly Brewer

Art and Discussion--60 minutes, split as you choose

Let's review what we've done. In the first session we took a look at patriarchy and its effect on us. In the second one we shared our personal stories. We are not likely to change the patriarchy any time soon, and we cannot change our past. That can be really overwhelming and disheartening. The question now seems to be, given these realities, how can we be our best, whole selves?

Over the next hour we will be talking about holding and letting go. An important part of growth is being able to define what we need and want to have in our lives and what we need to let go of or keep out. As with most things, the next part of the process – actually making these changes – is where the hard work is done. We cannot move toward a different life until we start to define how things need to be different.

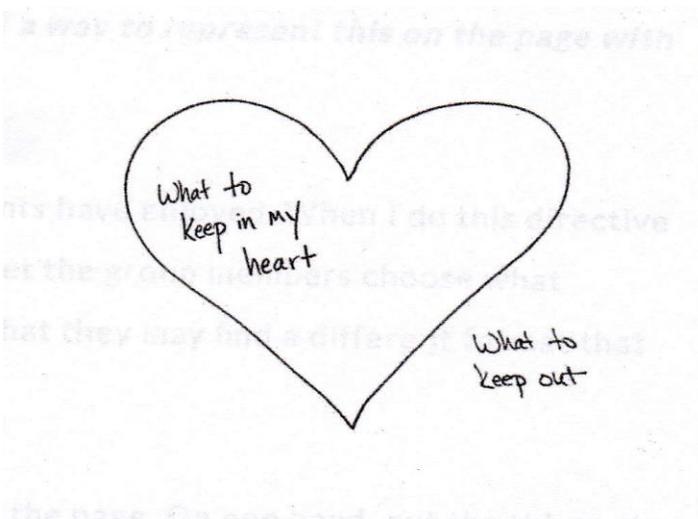
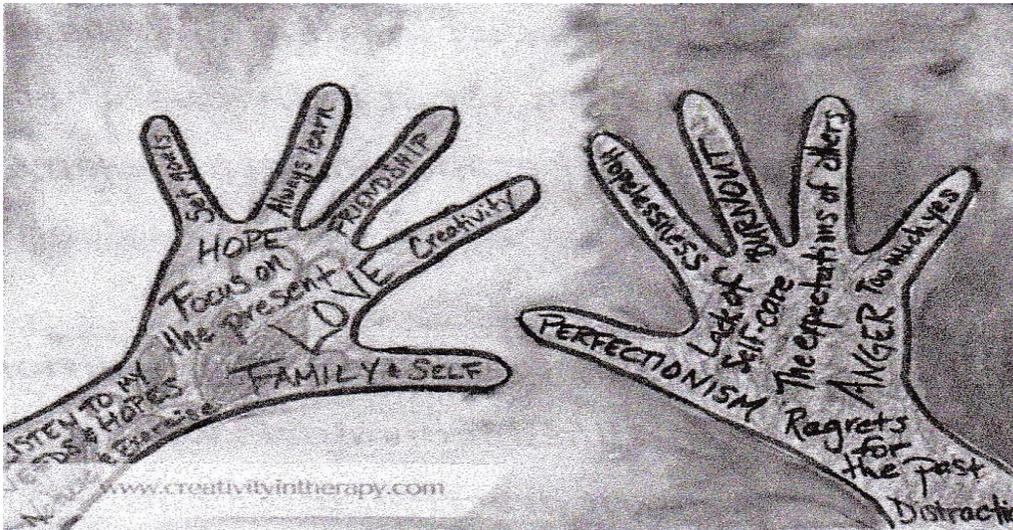
So, here's the first part – think about what you need to keep or hold on to in your life and what you need to let go of or keep out of your life. Find a way to represent this on the page with words and images. Here are some options that you can use, or make up a format that works for you. Feel free to develop your art in whatever way you like. Take about ____minutes for this.

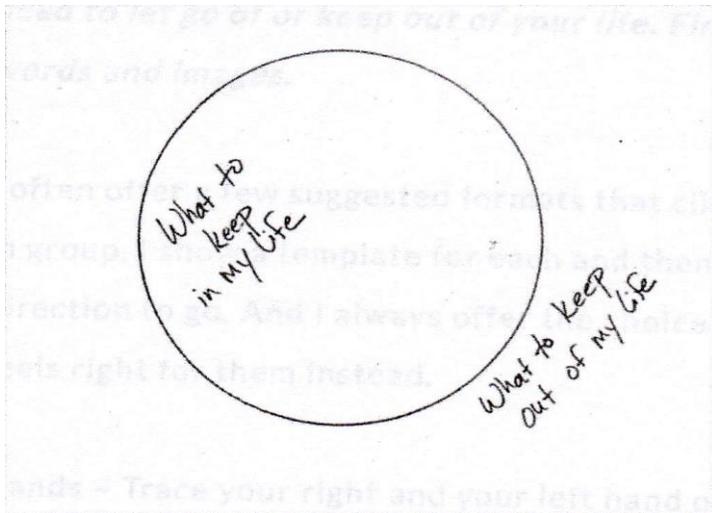
Hands--Trace your right hand and your left hand on the page. On one hand, put the things that you need to hold on to. On the other, put the things that you need to let go of.

Heart-- Draw a large heart on the page. On the inside, put the things that you want to keep in your heart. On the outside, put the things that you need to keep out of your heart.

Mandala/Circle-- Draw a large circle on the page. On the inside, put the things you need to keep or bring in to your life. On the outside, put the things that your need to keep out of your life.

Images on the next page





Discussion Options

- Ask each member of the group to share one thing that you want to keep and one that you want to let go of.
- How strong is your boundary between what you want and don't want in your life and does that boundary need to change?
- Which things have you already been able to work on and which ones would be new for you?
- Which things do you expect will be the hardest to let go of or keep out?
- How will your life or emotional well-being change if you are able to keep and/or let go of these things?
- What experiences and/or people have brought some of these things to your life?
- What are the next steps that you need to take to move toward what you have represented?

Closing Question/Exercise--10-15 minutes

- At about 10 minutes before the group closing time, point out that our time together is about to end. Ask: *Is there anything you need to be ready to leave here?*
- Remind participants of when the next meeting will be and any other logistics.
- Exercise:
 - Write on a card what you need to hear said out loud
 - Shuffle the cards and redistribute them
 - Each person reads the card they received (not their own) out loud. Each person takes the card home to hold it in their heart.

Closing Prayer – 5 minutes

- Read the following:

Remembering to breathe and to breathe deeply and then once more, to take the breath in and let the breath out, we pause, poised as we are, at a point of risking, at a possibility of courage:

Risking vulnerability

Risking pain

Risking being known

Risking being not believed

Risking being believed

Risking so much, including leaving the shadows behind, and stepping into healing light.

Risking being brave.

I will try to be brave. And if you are not feeling brave, you can have some of mine. And if I am not feeling brave, I will borrow some of yours. We will add our brave together, add it all up so that our brave-together light will outshine the shadow.

Let us notice and see, truly see, the pain in this room...and the possibility. Let us commit in the quiet of our hearts to do what you can to stop any future harm. And may we build and ever rebuild the world where safety, equality, and justice, wholeness and integrity, are the air we breathe.

May it be so. Amen.

Adapted from #MeToo Ritual Prayer by Karen G. Johnston

Or:

We come seeking
answers
comfort
understanding
hope
peace.

"Our spirit's healing temple is someone else's available and understanding heart,"

And so we pray that there will be those who offer
a listening ear, a healing touch.

We pray for strength, for
a few more morsels of faith
a few more nuggets of time when we can empty our minds of it all
and little spaces in our days and nights when we can touch another soul,
and be held in someone else's embrace.

Help us to find the hope that lies
beneath what our eyes can see and our ears can hear.
Help us to hold fast to the belief
that there is still goodness in this world.
Help us to respond out of love rather than out of fear.
Help us to trust again, knowing that
*"the arc of the moral universe is long" and that it does indeed "bend toward
justice."*

Mend once again our brokenness, and guide us toward the path of peace.

Blessed be. Namaste. A' Salaam Alakim. Ashe, Shalom, and Amen.

Adapted from "The Human Spirit" by Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley

- Allow for a few moments of silence as the group members take in the words of the prayer.
- Blow out the candle.

Session Four -Closing and Next Steps

Materials for Session 4

- Chalice
- Match or lighter
- Name tags
- Marking pens
- Coffee/tea and cups
- Snacks (optional)
- Community resource list (from Lay Ministry)-make sure women have this form first session, or perhaps have copies laying out at each session
- Lay Ministry cards and brochures – have at each session
- Chart paper and easel
- Overview of the four session topics on chart paper-for review
- Covenant from first time on chart paper
- Blank paper and pens (for journaling)
- Kleenex
- Microphone (as needed)
- Bowl of stones
- Singing bowl or chime (for time keeping)

Before this session, you also need to decide if you are available to continue with this group in some way or not. There is no expectation that you will continue.

You may also want to write the journaling prompts on a piece of chart paper.

Session Plan

Note: Times listed are suggestions based on a two-hour session. Adjust as appropriate.

Chalice lighting-5 minutes

Ask a participant to light the chalice while you read these words from Robin F. Gray

By the light of this chalice

we prepare for the future.

We prepare ourselves

for the times of triumph

and times of trial that might come.

We prepare ourselves to be present
to one another with loving hearts
even in the most difficult of times.

We prepare ourselves
to make the connections
that will lift us out of isolation
and prepare the path of justice and equality.

Check-in - 10 minutes

- Everyone checks in: How are you and is there anything you need to say in order to be fully present today?
- Do you have any further reflections on our last group that you want to share?

Covenant/Agreements - 5 minutes

Briefly review the covenants the group decided on in Session 1.

Reading/Centering - 5 minutes

For our reading, we revisit a reading that we heard when we first gathered.

Gathering of the Waters

It was at a gathering of women
when this gathering of the waters first came to pass.
Women in a second wave of gender self-awareness;
awakening,
 connecting,
 making new meaning,
 shifting the patriarchy.

The solidarity of these women was reflected in the waters each brought,
Waters that became a liquid harmony of each sweet voice and intention.

Today we gather as a community of women in a new wave of gender awareness;
awakening,
 connecting
 making new meaning,
 shifting the patriarchy.

Today, we seek more than solidarity and harmony.

We seek inclusion.
We seek mutuality.
We seek reconciliation.
We seek justice for all people.
Today, may our gathering of the waters reflect the gathering of our collective courage
In service of the grace and love that is promised by our liberal faith.

(Adapted from "Gathering of the Waters" by Renee Ruchotzke from Worship Web, <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/invocation/gathering-waters>)

Calming/centering Technique (Being in the present/3-2-1) - 5 minutes

This is another calming technique that you can do anywhere to bring yourself to the present.

Look around the room now.

- Name 3 things that you see in this room.
Say them out loud or whisper them. (pause)
- Name 3 things that you hear. (pause)
- Name 3 things that you feel.
- Name 2 things that you see.
- Name 2 things that you hear.
- Name 2 things that you feel.
- Name 1 thing that you see.
- Name 1 thing that you hear.
- Name 1 thing that you feel.
- Notice how you are in this moment, now.

Remind participants that they take this tool with them and can do it anywhere.

Review of where we have been together-10 minutes

[Using the overview of the four meetings on the flip chart (from session 1), briefly recap what we have done together. Especially highlight anything of note that the group has experienced together and that may be particular to your group.]

We first gathered 4 or 8 weeks ago. In our first time together, we met each other, many of us strangers. We made a covenant, agreements about how we would be together, which has guided each of our gatherings. We shared our experience of being a woman and of the patriarchy, what patriarchy is and how it has shown up in our lives. In our second meeting, we shared our stories and we listened deeply to each other. In our third meeting, we connected with the artist in each of us and shared what we want to hold on to and what we want to let go of. That brings us to today, our last planned time together. Today we will take some time to explore where we are now and what comes next.

What have we learned? -20 minutes

We offer this ritual for beginning to discern and integrate our learning. We are passing around a bowl of stones (or beads or something small and portable). Please take one that speaks to you and pass the bowl on.

Get comfortable in your chair. Pay attention to your breath. If you are comfortable close your eyes or soften your gaze. Relax your body, your neck, shoulders, your back, your arms and legs. Breathe easily.

Feel the smoothness of the stone in your hand. Feel it warm as you hold it. Relax and focus your mind.

As you relax, consider these questions:

What is one thing that you take away from this time together?

What in your life, if anything, has changed as a result of this time together?

Take a moment to sit in silence with these questions.

(Pause)

As you consider these questions, imagine putting into the stone all that you have learned; what you have taken in through all of your senses, what your body, mind and spirit know now. Imagine the stone receiving it and holding it.

If you wish you may whisper or speak aloud a word or phrase about what you have learned and are taking away from this time together.

We will sit in silence until everyone who wants to has spoken.

(Pause and give plenty of time for anyone to participate in the ritual. When completed, end with:)

Take your stone with you as a reminder of who you are as a learner and what is possible in community. May the warmth of our community nourish each of us as we continue to heal and grow.

(brief pause)

Blessed Be and Amen.

Stretch break-5 minutes

Invite participants to stand where they are and stretch, roll their head to stretch neck, touch their toes, reach for the sky, etc.

Where we are now and what we need next-25 (write for 15, share for 10)

We invite you into a time to discern where you are now and what comes next. We'll take some time to reflect and journal if you like, and then we'll have time to share.

Author Vi Keeland says:

"If you want to know where your heart is, pay attention to where your mind goes when it wanders."

This is a time to let your mind wander, let your heart speak. This is a time for self-trust, to listen to your heart. Take about 15 minutes to consider these questions or any others that come to mind:

What do you need now & going forward?

Do you need to make amends to yourself or someone else?

Do you need to ask for help?

When done, ask for participants to share as they are willing, in pairs or as a group, depending on how the group has preferred and developed over the weeks.

What comes next? -15 minutes

This is our last time together. We want to offer some time and space to consider if you want this group to continue in some way.

The leaders are not available (if you are not), so would need some leadership.

Church can provide space and Mary can provide some support. What that means: If you get in trouble as a group and need some help to get out of it. If you have questions or need resources. If you need pastoral care.

If the group continues, decide logistics, make sure contact info is shared.

Closing- 10 minutes

Expressions of gratitude to each other and "is there anything that you need to be ready to leave here?"

Invite participants to give a word of gratitude to each person in the circle. And say what they may need to in order to be ready to part.

Closing Prayer/blessing - 5 minutes

Read the following as a closing prayer:

Go in peace.

Hold in your heart the certainty

That the spirit of life is with you always.

When your heart is torn asunder

Or when you soar with sweet joy,

You are never alone, never apart,
From the spirit that resides within us,
That guides our lives and cherishes us always.

Take comfort.
Blessed be.

By Enid Virago on Worship Web
<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/closing/5973.shtml>

Allow for a few moments of silence as the group members take in the words of the prayer.
Blow out the chalice (unless it has already been blown out).
Thank everyone.
Debrief with your co-facilitator.

3 Calming Techniques

- Square breathing:
 - Breathe in for 4 counts; snap fingers or tap for 4 counts
 - Hold for 2 counts
 - Breathe out for 4 counts; tap for 4 counts
 - Hold for 2 counts
 - (After several square breaths): I invite you to relax your shoulders/arms/wrists/ankles with an out breath.

- Being in the present/3-2-1.
 - Look around the room now.
 - Name 3 things that you see in this room.
Say them out loud or whisper them.
 - Name 3 things that you hear.
 - Name 3 things that you feel.

 - Name 2 things that you see.
 - Name 2 things that you hear.
 - Name 2 things that you feel.

 - Name 1 thing that you see.
 - Name 1 thing that you hear.
 - Name 1 thing that you feel.

 - Notice how you are in this moment, now.

- Grounding, tapping
 - Imagine a beautiful place where you feel absolutely safe, can be a real place or something from a movie or book, or just in your imagination. Some people pick a favorite vacation spot while others like to be under the spirit tree in the movie Avatar, or from a book, like the Secret Garden.
 - In your imagination, notice how it feels on your skin to be in that place, what do you hear, what colors get your attention, as you experience this place more and more, allow your breath to be relaxed and natural.
 - Now, while staying in that place in your imagination, tap in a rhythm (close to a normal heart beat) on one leg, then the other, or cross your arms and tap your upper arms.
 - This can be used to relax before sleep, get your mind back to a calm place after recounting or remembering any difficult situation.