**Widening the Circle: February 2022**

**Soul Matters Covenant Group and Chalice Circle Session Guide**

**Preliminaries/Group business:**

**Opening Words and Chalice Lighting:** Empathy means acknowledging a horizon of context that extends perpetually beyond what you can see. —*Leslie Jamison*

**Check-in:**

**Topic Introduction:** We get comfortable in our usual patterns. For instance, we tend to interact with people who share our own views. We stick to habits and activities that we’re good at and that offer us predictability. But these circles of comfort may keep us small. So let’s consider our circles of comfort. Why do so many seek the safety of that inner circle anyway? Don’t we know that the circles not only keep others out but also the air? Haven’t we learned that it’s on the edge of circles that our potential for growth can be realized? Let’s take some time to consider the circles we are part of—from smallest (e.g., close friends and family) to largest (national, global, universal communities) and how we widen them. How do we do whatever it takes to meet each other face to face and become whole?

**Wise Words:**

Differences are not intended to separate, to alienate. We are different precisely in order to realize our need of one another. -*Desmond Tutu*

We must learn to live together as [siblings] or perish together as fools. —*Martin Luther King, Jr*

It’s the community’s job to figure out how we can stretch into the so-called margins to broaden our understanding and the ability to be inclusive. Inclusivity is not ‘how do we make you a part of what we are?’ but ‘how do we become more of what you are?’ —[*angel Kyodo williams Sensei*](https://whiteawake.org/2015/12/28/beloved-community-panel-discussion-buddhafest-2015/)

Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance. —*Vernā Myers*

The moral intent of restorative justice is to create a flourishing community that acknowledges the wrong done, holds wrongdoers accountable and invites them back into the community from which their offense estranged them. —*Michael Eric Dyson*

You can widen your circle of influence by widening your circle of service.  —*Joseph Grenny*

**Questions for Individual Reflection:**

1. Are you a circle maker, a circle joiner or a circle avoider?
2. Were you ever enriched by someone who widened a circle to let you in?
3. Has an experience of being excluded left a mark on you?
4. Have you widened a circle for others or do you know someone who needs you to widen the circle for them?
5. What circle(s) beyond those around your day-to-day interactions do you see yourself a part of? How have these circles changed over time for you?
6. What has life taught you about widening circles to include adversaries or those who see the world very differently?

**Responses/Discussion:**

**Likes and wishes:**

**Closing words and Extinguish Chalice:** Open your hands if you want to be held. —*Rumi*

**Additional Resources**

**Articles and videos:**

Considering restorative justice as one element in widening our circles:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/28/opinion/desmond-tutu-america-justice.html?unlocked_article_code=AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAACEIPuonUktbfqohlSlUZCybSRdkhrxqAwvTC27k7gHO7MDWJVHNLyukPAoOJvkXQfrZibNZ13yieQJUJFo4Tc8FI770VOV1xGU7vq4GYmZ8BLmJr-IntAT09g9eXBuk1tGLhP2T8IrkjyfjktULfaDbpXKWL2SIxNU0y98seAFKu0HQIz6_PFvckmYUtmKd8We0pAGsIdyKIvPH3Cx5hO9Xgbh7U6AY-WO0xSiiE1JfHqOpGKFMOfAqAGHBv4m8868deOMcUP8v8KB0hf8n-hdYBG8uR1IqMbfAa9aPrHUf1H8g&referringSource=articleShare>

When tragedy or trauma sweeps over our lives, our worlds become small. It becomes hard to extend our hearts and heads beyond the narrow feelings of fear, wounds and worry. As a way of widening that circle to include hope and connection, many have turned to the advice and words of [Fred Roger’s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LGHtc_D328): “[Look for the helpers](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mister-rogers-look-for-the-helpers-quote_n_5b19477ce4b0599bc6e15b4e).”

**How Not to Talk About Race**

*Patricia J. Williams*

<https://www.thenation.com/article/society/talk-about-race/>

On widening the conversation about critical race theory

**Gate A4, Naomi Shihab Nye**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jb-iGnA4pbo>

A poem on the wider circle of human community that is still possible.

**WindowSwap**

<https://www.window-swap.com/>

A website that allows you to widen your perspective by looking through windows from around the world!

**Book**

[**The Sum of Us**](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/564989/the-sum-of-us-by-heather-mcghee/?utm_source=pocket_mylist)**: What Racism Costs Everyone And How We Can Prosper Together,** **Heather Mcghee**