**UU Soul Matters Topic for January 2021**

**What does it mean to be a People of Imagination?**

 **Adapted for ERUUF Chalice Circle s and Covenant Groups**

**Preliminaries/Group Business:**

**Opening Words and Chalice Lighting:**

Imagination will often carry us to worlds that never were, but without it we go nowhere.”
― **Carl Sagan**

**Check-in** (Be aware of time, but also take the time you need):

**Topic Introduction:**

How might we reconsider imagination?

Imagination’s great gift is **improvement**. At least that is what we’re usually taught. The deep magic lies in the way it can reshape our reality. We are urged to imagine the world we dream of. A world with more justice. More peace. More love. From that, a mysterious magnetism arises, a magnetism that pulls our imperfect present into an improved future. Imagination moves us forward. It makes us better.

Yet there’s a way in which this view of imagination impoverishes us. It steals the stage. Shuts out imagination’s *other* precious gifts.

For instance, think of what happened when you got out of bed this morning. After a shower and a cup of coffee, you didn’t just pull on fresh clothes, you also pulled out a jewelry box and slipped on your grandmother’s ring. As you slid it on your finger, she slid, not just into your memory, but into your day. Now, because of imagination, you aren’t just elegant; you’re **accompanied.** Or how about that invisible friend of yours when you were a child? Imagination made sure you didn’t travel through those early years alone. It conjured up a loyal friend. Even today, amidst the hustle and bustle of adult life, tell me you don’t hear the guidance of ancestors and friends all day long. It’s all one giant reminder that imagination doesn’t just improve our lives, it populates it.

And **illuminates** it too. That’s right. Imagination isn’t just a force that drives us forward toward a more perfect future, it also pulls the sacred into our impoverished present. Imagination is what transforms trees from potential firewood into wise friends. Imagination is what moves us from lording over the natural word to seeing ourselves as part of it. It gives the world a soul. And not just the natural world, but the ordinary world too. Through the lens of imagination, we perceive the common as precious, even miraculous. The laughter of our children becomes the sound of angels. Sunshine on our face becomes a greater treasure than gold. Our “everyday” lives are understood as amazing adventures and inexplicably lucky gifts.

Look for, and be open to, the many messages of imagination. It’s not just shouting, “Improve the world!” It’s also pleading, “Let the world come alive!”

**Questions for Reflection:**

1. Have you ever been “saved” or “transformed” by your imagination?
2. When has imagination led you astray?
3. Is your imagination more often kind or cruel to you?
4. We all live with a voice that says “One day I will...” What “possible life” has been with you the longest?
5. Do you use your imagination to enhance reality or to flee from it?

**Responses/Discussion:**

**Likes and Wishes:**

**Closing Words and Extinguish Chalice:**

Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the thinks you can think up if only you try!

**-Dr. Seuss**

***Additional Resources***

**Definitions**

Buried in its roots, imagination carries the Proto-Indo-European root *aim* meaning "to copy" through the Latin root *imitari* meaning "to picture oneself.” There is a sense of imagination not being real, but a copy. An improved copy, a possible copy, a representation of what could be. Or, as Baldwin suggests, perhaps “imagination is the real life” which creates the exterior world**.**

***Wise Words***

They are ill discoverers that think there is no land when they see nothing but sea.

**-Francis Bacon**

My favorite Baldwin quote is, “The interior life is the real life… The intangible dreams of a person may have a tangible effect on the world.” It’s basically saying, what one can imagine, internally, what one can think about when nobody knows, when nobody’s around, one’s secrets, could shift human life. What an amazing thing.

 **-Jason Reynolds**

**Optional Exercises**

1. ***The Imagined Story That Has Shaped Your Real One***

All of us have a book or two that shaped who we are and how we live our lives. Some piece of fiction that rooted itself in our imaginations and from there wormed its way into our real-life living and loving. So, what book was it for you?

Take some time this month to figure out which one impacted you the most. For some it will be a book from our childhood. For others of us, it will be a book we read as an adult during a difficult time in our lives.

Whichever it is, search your imagination (and bookshelves) to find it. And while you are at it, why not read it and let it into your imagination again?! Consider sharing what this book has meant to you at your group’s next session.

1. ***Imagine the Colors & Location of Your Happiness***

The creative folk at Soul Pancake came up with this exercise. Inspired by art therapists, they asked people to color code all the things in their lives that bring them comfort and happiness. And then with those colors in mind, the participants imaginatively located those sources of happiness on their bodies.

Here’s the video to guide you on your way: https://www.facebook.com/soulpancake/videos/10155393464706117/?v=10155393464706117

Unlike those in the video, you may not have access to a giant sheet of paper on which to trace your entire body. No worries. Just pull out whatever size paper you have and trace out a smaller figure of yourself on it. The important part is not the size of your creation, but the location on which you place your meaning-filled colors.

Just as the art therapist encourages in the video, be sure to pay attention to which color you start with, which color anchors your effort and you.

Consider sharing any insights from this exercise at your group’s next session.