**UU Soul Matters Topic for December 2020**

**What does it mean to be a people of stillness?**

**Adapted for ERUUF Chalice Circle and Covenant Group Sessions**

**Preliminaries/Group Business:**

**Opening Words and Chalice Lighting:**

We have forgotten what rocks and plants still know; we have forgotten how to be still, to be ourselves,

to be where life is here and now. Eckhart Tolle

**Check-in:**

**Topic Introduction:**

Often when stillness weaves its way into our discussions, it’s framed as a retreat strategy. A balm from the frantic and frequently wounding world. But that’s not always the case. Stillness doesn’t always simply slow our breath and energy; it fills us with it. We can challenge the view that stillness is the resting place at the bottom of the hill we’ve climbed and instead imagine it as the basecamp that launches us into the long trek up the mountain. And alongside this vision of stillness enabling us to gather strength also sits the equally important idea of stillness as something that clarifies our perception. It can allow us to perceive that which is truly precious. And in doing so, it calls us back to our humanity.

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. *Viktor E. Frankl*

All of humanity's problems stem from our inability to sit quietly in a room alone. *Blaise Pascal*

When we hear the word “stillness” we immediately think of it as the opposite of movement - but stillness is something quite different altogether. Stillness is an energetic quality of being… Stillness is a choice. It can be felt by living in a state of presence where we remain connected to ourselves and are completely present in our body… it is our beingness that remains unaffected by any movement, action or doing even though it moves, acts and does. It is the depth of the ocean unaffected by its waves… Therefore, Stillness is not something we have to go in search of nor is it a journey into escapism or numbness. It is where we come from and what we are innately made of and thus it is our natural state of being.  Serge Benhayon

**Questions for Reflection:** (Answer 1-3, no crosstalk)

1. What do you know now about stillness that you didn’t when you were younger?
2. Has stillness ever spoken to you, given you strength, or clarified your perception? Were you ever saved by finding a “still space” in the midst of chaos?
3. We all have things that press our buttons, that send us into anger, trauma or that just shut us down. It’s so easy to lose our ability to carve out a space between stimulus and response. How do you navigate this challenge? Is there an example you would like to share?
4. Is there a moment of “stillness” that has never left you?
5. Does your identity tend to lean more toward busyness or stillness? Is it a balance that serves you at this time?

**Responses/Discussion:** (Time is variable; Crosstalk appropriate)

**Likes and wishes:**

**Closing Words and Extinguish Chalice:**

Through the sacred art of pausing, we develop the capacity to stop hiding, to stop running away from our own experience. We begin to trust in our natural intelligence, in our naturally wise heart, in our capacity to open to what arises. Tara Brach

***Additional Resources***

**Definitions**

The word stillness comes from the Middle English word stillness via the Old English *stilnes*, ‘meaning silence, absence of noise or disturbance, tranquillity, quietness and absence of movement’. The root still appears to derive from the Old English *stille*, related to the Old German stilli, meaning ‘be fixed, to stand’. It is also related to the Classical Greek word *stele* which means ‘a post’. In Latin the word for stillness is *silentium* meaning ‘silence and immobility’. Similarly, the Sanskrit word for stillness meant ‘immobile’.

**Wise Words**

By not giving ourselves the minutes — or hours — free of devices and distractions, we risk losing our ability to know who we are and what’s important to us.

*Alan Lightman*

A day of Silence can be a pilgrimage in itself.

A day of Silence can help you listen to the Soul play its marvelous lute and drum.

*Hafiz*

I like the silent church before the service begins, better than any preaching.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson, Self-Reliance and Other Essays*

Even sequestered we can busy ourselves and forget to stop.

When we stop and wait for others

in the gap we enlarge ourselves.

When the merely important stops for what is beautiful,

when we let a little sabbath interrupt our busyness

the holy enters in the empty spaces.

Stop, and let the Holy breathe in you.

Who knows? In the pause, angels may parade

the neighborhoods of your soul.

*Steve Garnaas-Holmes*

Stillness is the First Proof of God's Presence

*Sri Daya Mata*

**Video Meditation featuring Pablo Neurda’s poem *Keeping Quiet***

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5kjfqbt-FA

**My Life Changed When I Started Making Space For Stillness, Ryan Holiday**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNpKjSRUtI4

**Just Breathe**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVA2N6tX2cg

“In this powerful short film, watch and hear from elementary school students learning to use mindfulness to navigate complex feelings.”

**How Does Singing Help Achieve Stillness? - TED Radio Hour** https://www.npr.org/2014/11/21/364151177/how-does-singing-help-achieve-stillness