

## UUCMC Covenant Circle Session

### October, 2019: Belonging

#### Opening Words & Chalice Lighting

You only are free when you realize you belong no place — you belong every place.  
—Maya Angelou

#### Reminder of our Covenant

#### Check-In (3-4 minutes each)

#### Topic with Readings

##### Word Roots

The word “belonging” holds together the two fundamental aspects of life: Being and Longing, the longing of our Being and the being of our Longing.  
—John O’Donohue

We have this word, belong. We use it to mean, “being part of.” But the old English prefix be- has the semantic consequence of intensifying as it goes. So belonging means something closer to “the deepening of longing.” That’s how you belong—not by finally arriving, but by having longing for arrival quickened, by being willing to long after life by living  
—Stephen Jenkinson

##### Wise Words

But most of all, above everything else, who in the Bible besides Jesus knew–knew–that we’re carrying the kingdom of heaven around with us, inside, where we’re all too goddam stupid and sentimental and unimaginative to look?  
—J.D. Salinger, *Franny and Zooey*.

The only true belonging is the courage to stand alone and belong to ourselves.  
—AzrielReShel

As it turns out, men and women who have the deepest sense of true belonging are people who also have the courage to stand alone when called to do that. They are willing to maintain their integrity and risk disconnection in order to stand up for what they believe in... Guess what emerged as the greatest barrier to belonging? Fitting in. Because when we fit in, we assess a situation and acclimate. When we belong, we bring ourselves to it and say this is who I am.

—Brené Brown

Some of us aren't meant to belong. Some of us have to turn the world upside down and shake the hell out of it until we make our own place in it.

—Elizabeth Lowell, *Remember Summer*

This is where we all belong  
Many many miles from home  
Don't look back, you know better than that  
—Mapai, *A Million Ways To Live*

The child does not yet know what belongs and what does not: therefore for her all things belong. The ear of the child is open to all music. Her eyes are open to all arts. Her mind is open to all tongues. Her being is open to all manners. In the child's country, there are no foreigners.

—Kenneth L. Patton, *This World, my Home*

We belong to every part of our lives and every part of our lives belongs to us. Even the failures. The cruelty. The betrayals. The addictions. The cowardice. Until we embrace those scared and tender parts with the kindness and forgiveness, we so generously give to others we will never be whole. We will never be home.

—Rev. Scott Tayler

I didn't climb the tree because I [was] angry at the corporations and the government. I climbed the tree because when I fell in love with the redwoods, I fell in love with the world. My feeling of 'connection' is what drives me, instead of my anger and feeling of being disconnected.

—Julia "Butterfly" Hill, on her 738-day vigil to protect redwoods from logging

Anamcara in the Celtic world was the "soul friend."... With the anamcara you could share your inner-most self... you are understood as you are without mask or pretension. The superficial and functional lies and half-truths of social acquaintance fall away, you can be as you really are. Love allows understanding to dawn, and understanding is precious. Where you are understood, you are at home. Understanding nourishes belonging.

—John O'Donohue

Our society teaches us to ask, "What do I want?" Our religion invites us to ask, "Whose am I?" Two very different questions that lead to two very different lives. One question walks us down the path of accumulation and clinging. The other points to the way of community and connection. One says we find fulfillment in "success." The other says we find ourselves in belonging. So friends, which question will we allow to lead us? Every single sacred tradition says our choice is a matter of life and death.

—Rev. Scott Tayler

In the absence of belonging, there is always great suffering.

—Brené Brown

I'm on my way to a job where I am the only black person in my office. I work with people who either don't know or don't care about Alton Sterling or Philando Castile. They are going to ask me "How are you this morning?" and the simple truth is that I can't be honest. I can't say that I'm scared and angry and that I want to take a mental health day. I can't say that I and people like me subconsciously fear for our lives on a daily basis. I can't say how I am this morning because it will make them uncomfortable and offended. The offensiveness of my pain is why we have to remind America over and over again that Black Lives Matter: because if you lack empathy for our tears it's likely that you lack respect for our lives.

—Shane Paul Neil

The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us, and the light goes out.

—James Baldwin

## **Silent Reflection**

### **Questions to prompt discussion (choose ones that work for you)**

1. How would your days and heart change if you told yourself (and really believed): "I'm already home. I've already arrived"?
2. For you, what is the opposite of belonging?
3. We all have experiences of self-doubt. We all wrestle with "imposter syndrome" and the voice in our heads that says, "I don't really belong here and will soon be found out." Who was the first person that met you in that place of doubt and helped you get out?
4. What if you haven't really just been exiled or kicked out of the group, but instead put on a path to true belonging?
5. Who is sitting just outside your circle and needs welcomed in?
6. Does your "belonging work" lie in making room for your grief?
7. Have you ever had to sacrifice belonging for integrity? How about right now? Is your current source of belonging asking you to compromise your integrity?
8. Is it time to shift the question from "Who am I?" to "Whose am I?" How would your living and loving be different (and better) if it was a bit less about becoming and a bit more about belonging? What if "Am I succeeding?" was replaced with "Who needs me?" "Who loves me? With whose life is my own bound up?"
9. Have you ever found belonging in silence?
10. Have you ever found your better self in the middle of a forest?
11. Who taught you that it is safe to show your whole self? That every part of you belongs?

12. Did you find your place of belonging or create it?
13. What if belonging happens when you finally say to yourself “I’m enough”? What if belonging isn’t the moment you find your people but instead the moment you stop trying to prove yourself? What if the whole game is about finally belonging to yourself?

**Housekeeping Details** How goes your service project plans? Do you need ideas? Lisa, Michelle, Craig, or Virginia are happy to help!

### **Check-out**

### **Closing Words**

Home is where I want to be, but I guess I’m already there.  
—Talking Heads, “This Must Be the Place”