

Soul Matters a la Parker Palmer

Soul Matters practice has many origins in Quaker traditions, and the Circle of Trust practice presented by Parker Palmer emerged from his immersion in Quaker heritage. The combination of these two practices is more of a reconciliation and re-blending of the already compatible concepts. Some of the constraints added by the UU Soul Matters practice are a recognition of the UU tendency to challenge rather than be truly open and honest, and this is where the most discipline will be needed in this blended practice.

Circles of Trust often include encounters known as Clearness Committees, where a focus person has a question or quandary they need to explore, and other members of the committee help using open/honest questions — questions that are benevolently intended to help the focus person explore their need for clearness, and not to influence the focus person's thinking nor satisfy the committee members' voyeurism.

The proposed blended Soul Matters group will have 2 parallel tracks: a book study track, and a practice track that involves deep listening and O/H (open/honest) questions. The group

will meet twice a month, with the first meeting being the book study, and the next meeting being the practice.

- Monthly Book Study: Parker J. Palmer's, A Hidden Wholeness: A Journey Toward An Undivided Life. The study guide at the end of the book (Kindle Edition?) will be used.
- Monthly Practice: meetings will be structured as follows:
 - settling-in
 - ◆ looking deeply into the group; visual presence
 - ◆ a reading: group leader to select a reading related to the Soul Matters monthly theme
 - ◆ an exercise that can be done sitting or standing or by visualizing
 - intros/check-in
 - ◆ structure/theme proposed by the leader
 - ◆ brief: a minute or two
 - review covenant and/or practice principles
 - ◆ which one is calling to have more focus for members?
 - A "third-thing"
 - ◆ reading, music, art, or any material related to the Soul Matters monthly theme
 - ◆ share together, perhaps individuals reading parts, perhaps leader re-reading
 - ◆ multiple voices offering words that catch or

- emerge from the 3rd-thing
- ◆ leader has provided thoughtful questions, perhaps from monthly materials
- ◆ members take ~10 minutes to reflect, journal, embody, or otherwise consider 3rd-thing
- Small groups
 - ◆ each member has X minutes
 - ◆ share their impressions and ideas
 - ◆ any direction is fair
 - ◆ no reason to be constrained by offered questions
 - ◆ as members become more open/capable, O/H questions may be exchanged
- Re-join the full group
 - ◆ offering personal realizations
 - ◆ honor privacy of the small groups — share what is yours to share
- multiple voices that reveal the feelings being taken forward
- closing
 - ◆ reading, music, activity, etc. related to the Soul Matters monthly theme
 - ◆ gratitude
 - ◆ goodbyes
- Clearness Practice — to be considered for later in the "season"

- further development of this phase to be refined in the next few months
- the more monthly practice we have, the easier this will be

Blurb:

We will have a small group practicing deep-listening using Soul Matters topics and methods enhanced with Parker Palmer's Open/Honest Questions principles. The group will do a book study of Parker Palmer's "A Hidden Wholeness: A Journey Toward An Undivided Life" on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, and then practicing the blended deep listening and O/H questions on the 4th Tuesday. The season will wrap-up with the Clearness encounters described by Palmer.