

Self Renewal—BBUUC Journey Circle— January 2025

Chalice Lighting

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings, but connected, in mystery and miracle, to the universe, to this community and to each other.

Check-in: What is most on your mind today?

Opening Reading

“Life is an endless unfolding and, if we wish it to be, an endless process of self-discovery, an endless and unpredictable dialogue between our own potentialities and the life situations in which we find ourselves. By potentialities I mean not just success as the world measures success, but the full range of one’s capacities for learning, sensing, wondering, understanding, loving, and aspiring. You have to build meaning into your life, and you build it through your commitments, whether to your religion, to an ethical order as you conceive it, to your life’s work, to loved ones, to your fellow humans. Your identity is what you’ve committed yourself to.” (John Gardner, “The Road to Self-Renewal,” *Stanford Alumni* magazine, March 1994)

Topic Exploration

As your life has unfolded, have your habits, opinions, relationships and commitments brought surface satisfaction, but not deep contentment? Do you sometimes yearn to expand your experiences, explore your untapped abilities, and feel more grounded in your life choices? Perhaps it’s time to start a journey of self-renewal and build meaning into your life. Following are suggested steps to start that journey.

A. Know thyself. We are sometimes trapped in a role prescribed by our families and by society. We spend years working toward external rewards but ignore inner growth and fulfillment. Take stock of who you are now, and what you truly want from life. Make a list of baggage you’re still carrying that can be dropped. Examine how you view yourself, and how others view you. Then get rid of definitions that are no longer appropriate.

B. Re-think your purpose and priorities. Just as we need to grow in our relationships and our careers, we need to grow as human beings. Consider making a conscious commitment to a life of self-discipline and active service in the world. How can you expand your focus to incorporate compassion, inclusive

love, and service as a way to express your most deeply-held values? Self-Renewal / B. Shelton 2

C. Examine your motivation. To what degree do you want to renew yourself? Are you willing to take risks? Can you face your fears, and move out of your comfort zone? Can you take the time needed to create a new blueprint for your life?

D. Maintain optimism. You need to strongly believe that you can renew your life before embarking on such a journey, because it will inevitably involve pain and disappointments. Hope and optimism will enable you to withstand the mistakes and barriers along the way.

Questions / Sharing

1. What segments of your life do you believe could benefit from renewal?
2. How do you think your own self-image has created limitations in your life?
3. What aspirations have you had that have been set aside, but now might be the focus for renewal?
4. What are the elements that bring meaning to your life? How could service to others be incorporated into your re-energized renewal?
5. Small choices that we make every day will start the process of renewal. What choices might be the right ones for you to target?

Closing Reading

“We say that flowers return every spring, but that is a lie. The flower that wilted last year is gone. Petals once fallen are fallen forever. Flowers do not return in the spring; rather, they are replaced. It is in this difference between returned and replaced that the price of renewal is paid. And as it is for spring flowers, so it is for us.” (Daniel Abraham, *The Price of Spring*)

Check-out and reflections on today’s session: Please express any closing thoughts about the subject selection or process of today’s session.

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth,
the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.
These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Housekeeping