



# SPIRITUAL LIFE CENTER

## Our Values and Social Justice

Dear Friends,

First, I speak on behalf of the Spiritual Life Center community: we condemn the system and actions that perpetuate oppression and violence against millions of people of color in our country. Second, I speak to the community, nearly all of whom are white: if we truly are sickened and outraged by tragedies such as the death of George Floyd, the lack of health care and education, the misery of those living in poverty, then we have to ask ourselves, what are we doing about it? Some of us took action in the past. Some of us are taking action today. But many of us have done neither. Will we take steps to help change the system that spawns such tragedies?"



The four core values proclaimed by the Spiritual Life Center community can guide us here, if we truly actualize them. These values are **Contemplative Presence, Deep Listening,**



**Compassion, and Respect for all.** Through Contemplative Presence we open ourselves to others so that we might be in relationship. Through Deep Listening we learn who they are. Compassion for them flows from such knowledge, and this enables us to demonstrate Respect by the ways we engage with them.



We strive to embody these values when we accompany people in spiritual direction, and when we relate to one another within our community. But we must not stop there. We are called to extend these values to all people, whether stranger, family, friend or foe. To do otherwise is hypocritical and contrary to the Divine way.

True, it is hard to break out of cultural patterns that go back for centuries. It is hard to cut through the accretion of attitudes we have learned, consciously or unconsciously, since early childhood. For our justice-efforts to have staying power we need to ground them on an understanding of the reality of the situation. For this, we need to learn. We need to recognize that we don't know what it is like to be black or brown in the United States. We don't know all the ways we are contributing to a system of exploitation and oppression. We don't know how to improve the situation. So we need to learn, and an essential element of learning is Deep Listening. Let's start there.

Let us employ this gift and skill that we work so hard to nurture at the Spiritual Life Center by listening deeply to what people of color have to say. Let us listen to those who study society and human dynamics. Let us listen to the fear, mistrust, and prejudice as well as the Compassion and love in our own hearts so that we may realize what we are doing, and how we want to change. Let us listen to the Divine Source of Life that we might be drawn to do what is right and good.



Listen deeply not only to the words of protest marches, but to the history of slavery and segregation, to the data on poverty and illness, and to the structures that deny basic human rights. Listen to George Floyd gasping, "I can't breathe". Listen to the dreams of black children born into the ghetto and listen to the sound of those dreams being dashed as they grow up. Listen to the sound of racist hatred, and listen to the silence of our white majority, the deadly silence of indifference and fear.

I invite the members of our Spiritual Life Center community to be involved in the following ways:

1. Study books, articles, videos, movies—engage in discussion groups and help one another to raise consciousness.
2. Reflect, contemplate, and pray—listen to our hearts, and the cries for justice, and the response of the Divine.
3. Recognize our white privilege, and the ways we benefit from it.
4. Speak up when we encounter situations of bias and racism.
5. Ally ourselves Enter into dialogue with communities of color.
6. Encourage our directors and directees to reflect on and discuss issues of racism and white privilege.
7. Apply the Experience Cycle<sup>1</sup>, a tool we teach those in our Internship program, to situations of social injustice. [Click Here to read about a program that does this](#)  
**Note: the registration is closed but we anticipate offering the program again--let us know if you are interested.**

Listen and learn. Then speak out in solidarity, adding our voices to what people of color are saying so that other whites may hear it. May we act with increasing resolve and effectiveness as our knowledge grows.

Rev Oscar Brockmeyer



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<sup>1</sup> The Experience Cycle is a process of applying aspects of spiritual life to situations where peace, justice, and the integrity of creation are endangered. The steps of the Experience Cycle include these: gain insight into the movements in our own hearts, become educated about the matter, contemplate and pray in the light of divine guidance, seek discernment, take action, and reenter the cycle as needed. We will soon be offering a program that can help you engage in this process.