



Soul Matters

Flourishing Together



Small Group
June 2026

Welcome to Flourishing Together

[Campfire Stories](#) is a documentary film series that features people who are trying to belong to the earth and each other in new and transformative ways. One of their films features a man named Adam Wilson. He runs a community farm that is also an experiment in non-commercial food systems, sustainable living, alternative economies and what Adam calls “[radical neighboring](#).” As they film, Adam tells [this story](#):

Back in my early 20s, I heard a story. It sounded a bit like a fairy tale back then.

It was about a farm that began with three farmers, longing to grow food for their neighbors in a place where that had largely become impossible due to rising land prices. And so, they approached a group of interested neighbors with a plan, or at least a proposal or a plea, for the possibility of local food again in that place. This plan included a budget for what it would cost them to undertake a year growing a year's worth of vegetables for 30 households. Vegetables as well as milk and meat.

The farmers gathered the interested folks in a circle. They asked if they could go around the circle and have people pledge different amounts of money until the budget was covered, and it took a couple of rounds, but they did it.

A few years into the project, a woman came to one of the farmers, and she said, “You know, my husband and I love being a part of this farm and community, but we're gonna have to drop out of the farm because we've both lost our jobs.”

The farmer then said to her, “You know, I think you could do us, as the farmers and the membership as a whole, a real service, if you came to the meeting, and you pledged zero.”

And by golly, she had the courage to do just that.

Then the farmer told me that what happened next was that there wasn't a dry eye in the room.

So, there you got a bunch of middle class folks weeping in a way that usually would have been downright embarrassing in public.

So what happened there? Why were they weeping?

Well, we could tell a story that says they were weeping out of pity, that they pitied the poor woman and her family. But that might be a little bit too easy of a story to tell.

Maybe instead, in that moment, they had a felt sense of themselves as people who had the capacity to carry their neighbors. Which also means that they realized they lived among people who had the capacity to carry them on the day that they might need to pledge zero.

So friends, maybe the invitation this month is to pay attention to when you feel like weeping. A theme like flourishing carries the connotation of blooming, as if this month is solely about helping each other blossom brightly into the fullness of all we can be. But maybe it's also about softening. About waking up to the reality that our culturally-encouraged pursuits of independence haven't made us safe; they've only made us brittle. Maybe what this month wants most for us is a retrieval of tenderness. A reconnection to that part of us that longs to be vulnerable, that hungers to stop pretending we're stronger than we are, that understands that flourishing also involves unfolding our ability to say, “I hurt,” “I'm scared,” and “I need help.” Who wouldn't weep if they discovered that there really was a world like that out there?

Spiritual Exercise

Flourishing Together Through Stories

One of the most powerful - and often most underrecognized - sources of mutual flourishing is storytelling. Stories are the threads that weave us together. They are how we bond. The stories passed down and shared widely are the means by which we become “a people.” The stories we share with our children are the way they become, not just adults, but human. When others are brave enough to share their stories of pain, we discover that our suffering is not unique and our healing is not out of reach. When we feel empty, the stories of others fill us. When we feel weak or scared, the stories of others give us strength. One thing you can count on: Where you find flourishing, stories are sure to be close by.

To honor this, there’s only one spiritual exercise this month: We’re going to tell stories to each other! More specifically, we’re all going to identify one of our best stories about flourishing together and then share it with our groups.

This isn’t just about reconnecting with a powerful story from our life; it’s also a way of strengthening the bonds we’ve made as small groups. We don’t always think of our Soul Matters groups this way, but at their core they are all about flourishing together through storytelling. So as we end this church year and another chapter of our small group journey, we will gift each other with some stories, as a way of lifting up gratitude for the many lifesaving stories we’ve shared with each other this past year.

So how should you go about this? Well, for some of us, “Find a great story about flourishing together” is all the direction we need. But for most of us some prompts will help. A list of such prompts is below. If none of the prompts resonate with you, feel free to simply pick a story from your personal history that captures what life has taught you about flourishing together.

Flourishing Together Story Prompts

Tell a story about...

- The bedtime story that has stuck with you and continues to shape your values.
- Being rescued by the kindness of strangers.
- Finding community where you least expected it.
- Coming to believe that “no one is free until all of us are free.”
- Discovering that [true community](#) is “the place where the person you least want to live with always lives.”
- Being truly seen for the first time.
- Your church bringing you back to life.
- Being saved by your sibling.
- The bravest person you know (and how they enable you to be brave).
- How learning to be alone made your relationships better.
- Finding your “chosen family.”
- Learning to say, “I hurt” or “I need help.”

Finding Your Question

This list of questions is an aid for [deep reflection](#). How you answer them is often less important than the journey they take you on.

*So, read through the list of questions 2-3 times until **one question** sticks out for you and captures your attention, or as some faith traditions say, until one of the questions “[shimmers](#).” Or as we like to say, “Read over them until one of the questions **picks you**.”*

Then reflect on that question using one or all of these questions:

- *What is going on in my life right now that makes this question so pronounced for me?*
- *What might my inner wisdom be trying to [say to me](#) through this question?*
- *How might this question be trying to wake me up or get me to realize something through this question?*
- *How might Life or my inner wisdom be trying to offer me a word of comfort or challenge through this question?*



1. What circle of care and support helped you discover your unique brand of flourishing? i.e. what circle helped you know yourself in a way you couldn't have on your own?
2. You may have heard that we get by with a little help from our friends. What's one thing you might do this month to keep your friendships flourishing?
3. What if the flourishing of your friend groups and family depends, not on you being strong, but being vulnerable instead? Not just you supporting them when they are hurting or scared, but you being brave enough to say I'm hurting or I'm scared?
4. Has your flourishing ever been made possible by a stranger?
5. Who taught you to trust in the kindness of strangers?
6. What do you need to do to regain your faith in a future where we will all flourish together?
7. Is avoiding a tough conversation causing one of your precious relationships to wither on the vine?
8. Is it possible that our culture has tricked you into trying to flourish alone without you realizing it? Where in your life are you building walls of independence without realizing it?
9. At what stage of life were you best at noticing others in need?
10. How has age caused you to change your mind about flourishing?
11. What if this year is the year of you paying it forward?
12. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to find it.

Companion Pieces

Recommended Resources for Personal Exploration & Reflection

The following resources are not required reading. Nor are they intended to be analyzed in your group. Instead, they are here to companion you on your personal journey this month, get you thinking and open you up to new ways of embodying this month's theme in your living and loving.

Wise Words

And if it's true we are alone,
we are alone together,
the way blades of grass
are alone, but exist as a field.
Sometimes I feel it,
the green fuse that ignites us,
the wild thrum that unites us...

[Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer](#)

I get by with a little help from my friends.
Paul McCartney and John Lennon

Douglas Steere, a Quaker teacher, says that the ancient question, "Who am I?" inevitably leads to a deeper one, "Whose am I?" – because there is no identity outside of relationship. You can't be a person by yourself. To ask, "Whose am I?" is to extend the question far beyond the little self-absorbed self, and wonder, Who needs you? Who loves you? To whom are you accountable? To whom do you answer? Whose life is altered by your choices? With whose life, whose lives, is your own all bound up, inextricably, in obvious or invisible ways?

[Victoria Stafford](#)

If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten
that we belong to each other.
Mother Teresa

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the
whole community and as long as I live, it is my
privilege to do for it whatever I can.
George Bernard Shaw

A society grows great when the old plant trees
whose shade they know they shall never sit in.
Greek Proverb

Community and individuality are not an either/or
choice,... they are the poles of another great
paradox. A culture of isolated individualism
produces mass conformity because people who
think they must bear life all alone are too fearful to
take the risks of selfhood. But people who know
that they are embedded in an eternal community
are both freed and empowered to become who
they were born to be.

Parker J. Palmer

There is nobody in this country who got rich on
their own. Nobody. You built a factory out there--
good for you. But I want to be clear. You moved
your goods to market on roads the rest of us paid
for. You hired workers the rest of us paid to
educate. You were safe in your factory because of
police forces and fire forces that the rest of us paid
for... Now look. You built a factory and it turned
into something terrific or a great idea--God bless!
Keep a hunk of it. But part of the underlying social
contract is you take a hunk of that and pay forward
for the next kid who comes along.

Senator Elizabeth Warren

'Independence' ... middle-class blasphemy! We are
all dependent on one another, every soul of us on
earth.

George Bernard Shaw

Hoarding won't save us... All flourishing is mutual.
Robin Wall Kimmerer

Nobody's free until everybody's free
Fannie Lou Hamer

Until the killing of Black men, Black mothers' sons,
becomes as important to the rest of the country as
the killing of a white mother's son—we who believe
in freedom cannot rest.
Ella Baker

What should young people do with their lives today? Many things, obviously. But the most daring thing is to create stable communities in which the terrible disease of loneliness can be cured.

[Kurt Vonnegut](#)

What do we live for if it is not to make life less difficult for each other?

George Eliot

We need to recover our right to ask for help in grief, otherwise it will continue to recycle perpetually. Grief has never been private; it has always been communal. Subconsciously, we are awaiting the presence of others, before we can feel safe enough to drop to our knees on the holy ground of sorrow.

[Francis Weller](#)

We are called to be persons who embody hope for one another.

Paul J. Wadell

When members of the Native American Blackfoot tribe meet each other, they don't ask "How are you?" Instead, they ask "How are the connections?"

[Jeremy Lent](#)

If you want to go fast, go alone.

If you want to go far, go together.

African Proverb

Videos & Podcasts

Why Were They Weeping, Adam Wilson

https://www.instagram.com/reels/DI6TyQRx_1q/

Flourishing together under a fig tree...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9aT0A28IW7E>

Flourishing together in an airport gate...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwDXJ50U22o>

[Using painting](#) to help [everyone](#) in the community flourish.

The Tyranny of Merit & Loss of the Common Good

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qewckuxa9hw>

We've been tricked into having to buy the village back!, Trevor Noah

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DLKgFZiTG5w/>

AI is Not Being Designed to Help Us Flourish

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1470426854776926>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCJFzVtvhBQ>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3AtWdeu_GO

Understanding Juneteenth as a Celebration of Flourishing, Melissa Harris-Perry

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVwUEpVlv9c>

Fatherhood as a Flourishing of Unconditional Love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmipaszEL5Q>

A Blessing for the Flourishing of Pride Far Beyond the Borders of a Single Month

<https://www.facebook.com/SideofLove/videos/999494241185136>

Movies & TV

[Little Miss Sunshine](#)

Flourishing together when the world is not on our side.

[The Station Agent](#)

Friendship as the source of our flourishing.

[Station Eleven](#)

On flourishing together despite the end of the world.

[The AI Doc: Or How I Became An Apocaloptimist](#)

Taking seriously how AI will lead to us flourishing together or falling together.

Music

Click [here](#) for the **Spotify** playlist on Flourishing Together

Click [here](#) for the **YouTube** playlist on Flourishing Together

© 2025-26 Soul Matters ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Packets are for use ONLY by member congregations of the Soul Matters Sharing Circle.

Learn how to join at <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com>