

CARYL & JAY CASBON

SIDE_{by}SIDE

the sacred art of couples aging
with wisdom & love



Side by Side

**Soup & Story Club Program
Instruction Manual**

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Side by Side Soup & Story Club Program

INSTRUCTION MANUAL

for creating couples' groups to explore the stories and
themes in *Side by Side: The Sacred Art of Couples*
Aging with Wisdom & Love

Caryl & Jay Casbon

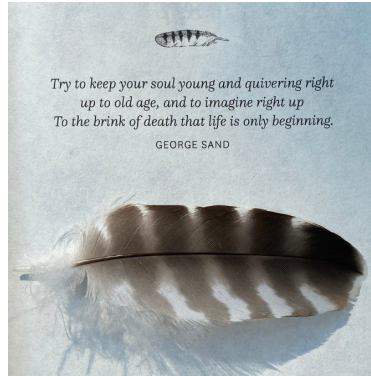
I take literally the statement in the Gospel of John that God loves the world. I believe that the world was created and approved by love, and it subsists, coheres, and endures by love, and that insofar as it is redeemable, it can be redeemed only by love. I believe that divine love, incarnate and indwelling in the world, summons the world always towards wholeness.

Wendell Berry
—*The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essay*

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***SIDE BY SIDE* SOUP & STORY SUPPER CLUBS**

FOR COUPLES AGING WITH WISDOM & LOVE

INTRODUCTION

There is something profoundly satisfying about sharing a meal. Eating together, and breaking bread together, is one of the oldest and most fundamentally unifying of human experiences.

Barbara Coloros

If you are interested in forming a couples' group to explore the intersection of the themes of aging, relationships, and spirituality, this instruction manual is for you. It offers clear, step-by-step directions, including handouts to be copied for the meetings, etc. Welcome!

Since we released *Side by Side: The Sacred Art of Couples Aging with Wisdom & Love*, it has become clear that our book's collection of true stories of couples in committed relationships is not meant to be read alone. It is best read aloud and discussed with one's partner, but it can have even more impact when shared in a community of other couples navigating through the autumn and winters of their lives. As Jay & I currently participate in such a group, we are finding that the simple act of congregating around the warming fires of our homes and hearths with two to three other couples provides a nurturing container for the ancient practice of storytelling, listening deeply to each other's tales and travails, and learning about

how, as a couple, to "age together in wisdom & love" as the title promises. Animating this work are such questions as: "What does it mean to practice relationships as a sacred art?" "How do our committed relationships offer us opportunities for spiritual growth?" "Can we embody our spiritual values and practices like mindfulness, compassion, kindness, humility, silence, deep listening, and devotion in our relationships?" Enriching our relationships is the goal.

In our group, as the months progress, we find we are going deeper with the themes while forming strong bonds of kinship. We usually don't have access to other couples' inner workings. Couples are seldom given opportunities to talk directly with one another about their relationships. In our group, many express gratitude for the invitations to reflect deeply with one another. Since Jay and I enjoy our group so much, we want to make this program available to others. Thus, we decided to create this instruction manual with specific guidelines on how to form a Soup & Story Supper Club to explore the themes in *Side by Side*.

Throughout life, many weather the ups and downs, joys and sorrows in their relationships within the privacy of their homes, not realizing other couples face similar issues. We know there is much to learn from our partners, but we often miss the lessons. In our Soup & Story group, as we disclose our concerns about our adult children, confront health issues and caretaking demands with each other, and celebrate the freedom to learn, grow, and experiment at this time of life, there is a sense of relief when we realize other couples wrestle with the same things; we aren't alone and can learn from each other. We all know that love close to home is rich and complicated, entailing family patterns and ancestral influences, failure, and disappointment; relationships defy perfection. With age, we realize time is limited and want to make the most of the years we have left together. We intuit that Wendell Berry is right . . . *that the world was created and approved by love, and it subsists, coheres, and endures by love, and that, insofar as it is redeemable, it can be redeemed only by love.* Where else can we grow in our capacity to love than in our committed relationships and daily shared lives?

There is currently a dearth of opportunities for couples' groups in the life of churches and an abundance of aging couples filling the pews. We believe there is a great need and opportunity for programs like this.

While *Side by Side* contains a User's Guide for creating a book group, the Soup & Story Supper Club differs. It invites a level of ongoing fellowship, celebration, and camaraderie with kindred spirits that build over time, created through sharing potluck meals and then telling stories about our relationships around the table. When the meal is completed, the group moves to the living room and conducts a Circle of Trust® book discussion, addressing one chapter per month. It is designed to be spacious, trustworthy, fun, and serious.

WHY SOUP?

TRANSFORMATION UNDER HEAT & FIRE

Only the pure in heart can make a good soup.

Ludwig van Beethoven

Like aging couples, soups are a soulful amalgamation of flavors and ingredients that have undergone a transformation under heat and fire over time. Soups are unpretentious, forgiving, generous, and often get better with age. Cooking a soup invites improvisation and enhancement with leftover wine, a bowl of brown rice from last night's stir fry or mushroom gravy. Finally, soups take us through the seasons and give us a sense of place . . . butternut squash from your garden in the fall, hearty lentil or minestrone in winter, cream of asparagus in spring, and a chilled vichyssoise in summer. They are usually inexpensive, abundant, and easy to make.

The perfect metaphor for this program, soup symbolizes the nourishing chemistry of what sustains us when friends gather to share generously and organically with each other. It speaks to one of our deepest hungers: to be fed by loving, truthful, charged, meaningful encounters in a trustworthy community.

Soup is an ideal main dish for a supper club. When you add bread, salad, and a delicious dessert, you create a feast.

WHY STORIES?

And the storyteller's claim, I believe, is that life has meaning—that the things that happen to people happen not just by accident, like leaves being blown off a tree by the wind, but that there is order and purpose deep down behind them or inside them and that they are leading us not just anywhere but somewhere. The power of stories is that they are telling us that life adds up somehow, and life itself is a story.

Frederick Buechner, *The Magnificent Defeat*

Since ancient times, people have gathered around the fire, on front porches, next to water coolers, and around the kitchen table to swap stories. When we share our stories, we offer each other a radical gift of hospitality and a glimpse into the mysteries of our lives. When we listen to stories, we learn from others' experiences and often identify with them; we realize we are not alone. Stories are how we pass along wisdom. We remember stories.

Stories employ the language of experience. When we recount a story, it is like sharing a dream, where we reveal many layers of meaning that even the storyteller doesn't entirely comprehend. Through stories, we teach each other lessons; if we are lucky, we even hear ourselves and learn the deeper meaning of our experiences.

Couples are seldom asked to share their stories, yet they often have enough yarns to fill a book. This program honors the art and craft of storytelling and the value of a couple's lives and experiences by engaging in "table talk." When we sit down to the feast of soup and bread, using a "table talk" suggestion for each meeting in this guide, we are also fed by sharing our relationship stories around the dinner table.

LOGISTICS FOR ORGANIZING A GROUP

When we are generous in welcoming people and sharing something with them—some food, a place in our homes, our time—not only do we no longer remain poor: we are enriched.

Pope Francis

How it works

Begin by inviting a group from your friendship network, neighborhood, or church affiliations consisting of three to four couples. You will establish when and how often you will meet at your initial meeting. The first half of the evening involves enjoying a potluck soup dinner or lunch while sharing stories around the table. When the meal is concluded, the group moves to the living or meeting room to explore the intersection of three themes: committed relationships, aging, and spirituality, using the guidelines for each meeting in this instruction manual, as well as the video clips of each couple posted on the website: www.sidebysideaging.com

Length of each session: 2½ to 3 hours (depending on how long you take to dine.)

Whom to invite: This program is for couples in committed relationships, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, living into the autumn/winter of their lives, who are interested in meeting with a few other couples to engage with the teaching stories and themes in *Side by Side*. Couples' ages range from their fifties to their eighties and nineties. See below for other considerations before inviting people into this group.

Size of group: 3-4 couples, or as many as you have room for around your tables.

Group meeting times: The time of day and frequency of meetings are determined at your first meeting. If some of your members can't drive at night, choose to meet for lunch, brunch, or an early supper. If a couple does not have a large enough home to accommodate the group, someone can offer their home for their use. The group can begin by scheduling four or five meetings and extending them to more if you

wish to continue, or you may read the entire book (13 chapters). We found that meeting once a month worked well.

Where to meet: Each gathering convenes in the home of the Table Hosts, which rotates for each meeting.

Suggested meal plan structure: To keep it simple, take turns bringing the items listed below (however, some groups choose a more elaborate menu):

- ❖ The Table Hosts provide soup, libations, and table settings,
- ❖ One couple brings bread & butter and cheese,
- ❖ One couple brings a salad,
- ❖ One couple brings a favorite dessert.

Table Talk: The meal focuses on each couple responding to the same story prompt. The story suggestions are embedded in the meeting designs below, albeit the hosts can offer their own story prompts if they wish. Sharing is always optional.

How to begin: When people arrive and the food is served, the Table Hosts will light a candle, invite a brief time for silence, and then begin the meal by reading or saying grace, a poem, or a blessing. Below is a blessing that invokes the intent and spirit of this gathering. Before reading your choice of a blessing, you can ask people to join hands around the table.

After the blessing, the supper host will read aloud the invitation to tell a story. All story suggestions are incorporated into each session's instructions. Before you are done eating, every couple should have had a chance to share a brief (approximately 3-5 minutes) response to the invitation. However, it is always voluntary. It is okay if a couple wants to pass. When someone is talking, listen respectfully and in silence; don't interrupt their sharing. Thank them when they are through. If necessary, one person can time the sharing to ensure everyone gets a turn.



A Soup & Story Supper Blessing

As we gather around this table

in the Spirit of kinship

and in the grace of one another's company,

we give thanks for this delicious meal,

as we remember those who will go without.

May our bodies be nourished by this simple spread,

and our stories inspirited by humor,

truth, humility, and grace.

May our listening be clear, generous, and kind.

And may we extend to one another a beneficial presence

as we celebrate the gifts of age, the gifts of relationships,

and this gift of life.

Amen

THE LEADERSHIP FOR THE BOOK DISCUSSION CIRCLE OF TRUST

(When aging) we do not need formulas or rigid models to follow; we need to be drawn into a common process of search that will suggest new ways of being.

Mary Catherine Bateson

This section provides guidance for the leaders of the book group discussion following the meal. One couple should agree to provide the leadership for this part of the program for the entire time you assemble. While couples take turns hosting the dinners, the Circle of Trust® leadership is not passed around. The Circle of Trust leaders study the group process carefully and assist the community in staying on track, following the design for exploring each chapter and adhering to the boundaries defined in the Touchstones. The Circle of Trust leaders will also ensure the meeting times, chapter assignments, and home site locations are clear through email reminders, etc. Below is an abridged version of the Readers' Guide from *Side by Side*. You are encouraged to read both versions.

The following description of the group structure is based on the Circle of Trust® approach developed by Dr. Parker J. Palmer and the Center for Courage & Renewal (<https://couragerenewal.org>). The Circle of Trust format offers clear guidelines for being together in ways that ensure respectful listening, safety, confidentiality, and honest sharing as groups explore the material together.

What Happens in Circle of Trust Book Discussion?

For each meeting, choose one chapter for your focus and request that it be read before attending this meeting. The meeting begins with reading the Touchstones, then viewing a short film clip (5-7 minutes), followed by a brief discussion and check-in. The group will then be offered time for silent reflection and journaling based on the questions provided in this guide. Each couple will then meet privately to share their reflections. Finally, there will be a large group discussion and a closing circle. The timing should always feel relaxed and not rushed, with space for welcoming silence when no one is sharing. Always begin and end the group at the agreed-upon times. This helps you maintain boundaries, build trust, and encourage people to arrive on time! As the group leader, you are invited to add your own

touches, including poetry, music, YouTube clips, etc., that fit your leadership style and the group you serve.

The Work Before the Work for Leaders

If you have agreed to lead the book discussion for your Soup & Story Club, before each meeting, be sure to read the chapter, view the interview clip of the couple to be discussed, and answer the questions provided for the upcoming session. It is the best and only way to prepare for leading with this work. Unlike many other groups, the group leaders of a Circle of Trust always participate in the group sharing.

Whom to Invite

Part of discerning whom to invite is determining who is appropriate for this program. This process calls for vulnerability and self-disclosure when exploring issues related to aging, spirituality, and relationships not often found in other spiritual programs. Both individuals in the relationship must be willing to participate and not feel coerced. A relationship is a dynamic, living entity with conflicts, tensions, and unconscious behaviors and patterns. This is entirely normal. When couples are willing to address concerns if they emerge, we consider this healthy and life-giving. However, in the case where there is extensive unaddressed pain and tension in a relationship, this couple may need counseling rather than this group; it is essential to be clear that this is not a therapy group, nor are the volunteer group leaders trained therapists. If you offer a group through your church or a nonprofit organization, consult with your leadership team regarding eligible couples or any concerns you may have.

Aging Considerations

Time of Day

Due to visual impairment, some aging couples find it difficult to attend meetings at night (especially in winter); in this case, you may want to schedule your sessions in the afternoon when there is enough daylight.

Vision & Hearing Issues

It is common for elders to suffer from hearing loss. If you don't address this issue, those who can't hear will drop out or become frustrated, for it is painful and isolating not to be able to follow what is going on. When showing the video clips of the interviews, use closed captions by pressing the little blue box with “cc” at the bottom of the video. Following the Touchstones also helps with hearing issues, for only one person speaks at a time. Encourage everyone to speak up when sharing in the large circle.

Those with visual problems may read the book on a Kindle, where they can use a larger font. With the handouts or other printed materials, use a clear, large font and double space so it is easier to read.

For Individuals Experiencing Dementia

Finally, if someone in a couple is suffering from severe dementia from a stroke, Parkinson's, or Alzheimer's disease, etc., participation in this group is inappropriate. To create a safe space, participants need to be capable of learning, respecting the boundaries when others share, and gaining from the reading. While it is disturbing to exclude them, you are also protecting them and their partner from embarrassment.

Expectations for Group Members

What to Bring to Each Session

It is recommended that participants bring a copy of *Side by Side* to reference. Each person should also bring a journal, pen, and a copy of the Touchstones provided at the first session.

Attendance

To ensure continuity, it's highly recommended that group members commit to faithful attendance at all meetings to the best of their ability. Trust builds over time;

poor attendance or people not showing up on time undermines this trust. Once the group is formed, we don't advise adding new couples.

Of course, legitimate interruptions occur, and there is always room for extending grace for understandable absences.

Frequency & Timing of the Meetings

The chapters can be read in any order. There are thirteen chapters, one for the story of each couple we interviewed for *Side by Side*. It is, of course, up to the group to choose how many chapters to address. You could begin with four sessions and choose one story from each section, or schedule a group to meet monthly or more often and work through the entire book. A single meeting will suffice if you work with only one or two chapters in the collection.

Touchstones for Creating Safe Space

When we participate in a group with the goal of soulful, personal, spiritual reflection, we ideally enter a covenant with each other to be faithful to how we listen, share, and, most importantly, hold what is disclosed in confidence. Based on our 27 years of work through the Center for Courage & Renewal facilitating the Circle of Trust® approach, we use the Touchstones© (below), which serve as "rules of engagement" for the group. Take turns reading each Touchstone aloud at the beginning of every meeting.

Sharing

Sharing in a Circle of Trust is always optional and never mandated. Individuals can listen and not talk about their writing (as the Touchstone states: "This is not share or die"). Unlike other groups, we never march around the circle and demand that someone speak but allow people to share when they feel ready. The leader makes sure that everyone who wishes gets a chance to speak. If someone goes on too long, gently say, "We need to move on so everyone gets a chance to share."

When an Individual Speaks

In this format, we listen respectfully but do not comment on or challenge what another person says. Unlike a traditional book group, we don't debate ideas but instead ask questions, and when it is our turn, we share our personal responses and stories. We never speak for our partners but speak for ourselves. There is no "right or wrong" response; it is about each person's truth or story about what they heard in the chapter. If this guideline is violated, the group will quickly become unsafe, and the sharing will remain on the surface.

Ending the group with a closing circle

The leader will end the session with a closing circle. We invite the participants to briefly state what insights or surprises they experienced while reading and reflecting on a chapter or listening to one another.

Suggestions for Going Deeper

Each chapter covers many themes; it is impossible to take enough time in a meeting to cover all the themes and material. Couples will get more out of this study if they continue at home, so we offer suggestions for "going deeper." This is entirely optional. Present them at the close of your meeting, and encourage the couples to take up the invitation. They are included on the handouts, or the leaders can email the instructions after the meetings.

A Sample Outline for the *Side by Side* Book Discussion

Timeline: (1 hour & 40 minutes) 6:30-8:10

Please note: A handout for each session is included at the end of the thirteen outlines below, which the group leader can copy and distribute. It contains reflection questions and practices to continue discussing and deepening the work at home.

Following the meal and storytelling, take a quick break and invite the group to reconvene in the living/meeting room, where you will discuss the book.

6:30-6:35 Circle of Trust Group Leaders: As you settle down in the meeting room, as a transition from supper to a book group, note that you are now creating a Circle of Trust based on the practices embodied in the Touchstones to explore a chapter in the book. Be sure everyone has a copy of the Touchstones and something to write on and write with. **Then, read the Touchstones.** You can print a copy for each person for the first meeting and ask that they bring them back each time, along with a journal and something to write with.

6:35-6:45 For a brief check-in, ask if anyone would like to share about practicing the "going deeper" suggestions or how they have been living with the themes we discussed at the last meeting.

6:45-6:55 Announce that you will show the video clip that goes with this chapter, where you will see a portion of the interview with the couple you are discussing. To view this clip, bring a laptop computer and go to the link: www.sidebysideaging.com, or ask to use a computer and monitor at the Table Hosts' home. When you get to the website, on the menu bar at the top of the page, you will find "Interviews." Click on that, and then scroll down to the couple's interview. These clips last around 6:00 minutes. If you can connect your laptop to a TV, it will be easier to see, but it is not necessary. You can also read the couple's description included in the notes, highlighting where they live and how they came together.

6:55-7:05 After watching the interview, invite the group to share anything they wish about what they learned from reading this chapter or this video clip. The guidelines for each chapter offer questions you can use to encourage a thoughtful discussion.

7:05-7:15 Next, invite the group to enter a time of silent reflection, writing in their journals in response to the two questions relating to the chapter. (We suggest you copy the handout with these questions for each person to save time and cut back on confusion.)

7:15-7:35 After journaling, each couple meets privately to share and discuss their reflections. The couples can spread out for more space for this conversation.

7:35-7:50 The Group Leaders call the community back to the circle for a discussion. The leaders invite anyone who wishes to name something they want to bring to the large group.

7:50-8:00 Before the closing circle, decide on the date, time, and Table Hosts for your next meeting and who will bring what dish. The next meeting's Table Hosts will email the group a reminder and instructions to their homes.

Going deeper: For those wanting to continue working with the themes introduced in this meeting, read aloud the recommended practices for the coming month. These suggestions are printed on the handout.

8:00-8:10 Closing Circle Invite anyone who wishes to briefly state, in a sentence or two, what has touched them during this gathering, how they may have felt challenged, an insight they are taking away from the group, or simply how they are feeling. You may end the session with "The Beatitudes for Couples" or the Group Leaders' poetry or song choice.

Touchstones® for the *Side by Side* Circle of Trust Book Discussion



- Extend and receive welcome. People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this circle we support each by giving and receiving hospitality, both to what comes up from within, as well as what is shared in community.
- What is offered in this circle is by invitation, not demand. This is not a "share or die" event! During this meeting do whatever your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Your soul knows your needs better than we do.
- Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth. Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one's truth in a Circle of Trust does not mean interpreting, correcting, or debating what others say. Speak from your center to the center of the circle, using "I" statements, trusting people to do their own sifting and winnowing.
- No fixing, no saving, no advising, and no correcting each other. This is one of the hardest guidelines. But it is vital to welcoming the soul, to making space for the inner teacher. When someone speaks in this meeting, we simply listen and receive their sharing in silent attendance.
- When the going gets rough, turn to wonder. If you feel judgmental or defensive, ask yourself, "I wonder what brought her to this belief?" "I wonder what he's feeling right now?" "I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?" Set aside judgment to listen to others—and to yourself—more deeply.
- Attend to your own inner teacher. We learn from others, of course. But as we explore stories, questions, and silence, we have a special opportunity to learn from within. So pay close attention to your own reactions and responses to your most important teacher.
- Observe deep confidentiality. Nothing said in this meeting will ever be repeated to other people.

Beatitudes for Couples ©



Blessed is the couple who welcomes Divine Presence into their midst, for they shall know Eternal Belonging, grace, and love.

Blessed is the couple who embraces all seasons of life, the perennial cycles of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, for they shall know wholeness.

Blessed is the couple who welcome the stranger in each other, for they shall find wonder and encouragement on their growing edges.

Blessed is the couple who confronts their own shadows, for they shall be freed from blame and projection.

Blessed is the couple when they listen deeply to each other, for they shall be seen, understood, and met.

Blessed is the couple who practices compassion, for they shall honor the Spark of the Divine in all of their brothers and sisters.

Blessed is the couple who cares about the other's needs as much as their own, for they shall enjoy the fruits of mutuality.

Blessed is the couple when they extend tender care to one another when suffering, diminished, wounded, or shamed, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed is the couple who recognizes the Indwelling Spirit in all of life, for they shall encounter the Mystery and see the Light in all beings.

Blessed is the couple who dance with the tension between "me" and "we," for they will know companionship without loss of self.

Blessed is the couple who openly and humbly address conflict, for they shall find truth, reconciliation, and freedom from violence.

Blessed is the couple who practices Sabbath through the daily bread of devotion, mindfulness, and prayer, for they shall find Home.

Blessed is the couple who extends mercy and forgiveness, for they shall be relieved of resentment and harsh judgment.

Blessed is the couple who offers a beneficial presence across the generations, for they shall leave a legacy of love.

Blessed is the couple who celebrates life with the Spirits of tomfoolery, shenanigans, creativity, and play, for they shall know humor and mirth, and have some really good times.



**Meeting One for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Addressing the Themes in Chapter One: Jim & Marianne Houston**

*Blessed is the couple who welcomes Divine Presence
into their midst, for they shall know
Eternal Belonging, grace, and love.*

Table Hosts: The Table Hosts welcome the guests as they arrive. As you settle down, please share an overview of the evening with the group, including opening with a prayer, song, or poem. Then, while enjoying the meal, tell a story about your relationship based on the “Table Talk” suggestion. Offer a gentle reminder about how this invitation is optional and that no one should share if they do not want to.

Below are the agenda and instructions for leading this gathering, with a flexible timeline that gives you an idea of the flow of the evening. The Table Hosts facilitate the first half of the gathering, and then the Circle of Trust Leader/s will conduct the second half.

5:00-6:30 Dinner

After reading the blessing or poem or playing a song, enjoy your meal and begin to share stories based on the following prompt:



Table Talk Story Suggestion: As we begin our time together as a new community, recount the story of how you first met. What brought you together, and what has kept you together?

After the meal and storytelling are concluded, take a quick break and invite the group to reconvene in the living/meeting room.

6:30-6:35 Circle of Trust Group Leaders: As you settle down in the meeting room, as a transition from supper to a book group, note that you are now creating a Circle of Trust based on the practices embodied in the Touchstones to explore the first chapter in the book. Be sure everyone has a copy of the Touchstones and something to write on and with. You can print a copy for each person for this first meeting and ask that they bring them back each time, along with a journal and something to write with. (Bring extra paper and pens in case someone needs them.) **Then, read the Touchstones.**

6:35-6:45 Announce that you will show the video clip that goes with this chapter, where you will meet Jim & Marianne Houston, who live in Madison, Wisconsin. To view this clip, bring a laptop computer and go to the *Side by Side* link: www.sidebysideaging.com. When you get to the site, on the menu bar at the top of the page, you will find “Interviews.” Click on that, and then scroll down to the interview with Jim & Marianne. Their interview lasts 6:03 minutes. If you can connect a computer to a TV, it will be easier to see, but it is unnecessary. Before watching the video, you can also read their biography below, which describes where they live and how they came together as a couple.

Jim & Marianne Houston

What a wonderful thing was the Loving Decision by the Supreme Court in 1967! When we married in 1968 we rejoiced with much of the nation: interracial marriage was finally legal in the U.S. When we celebrated our 50th anniversary in 2018 we called our party “Celebrate Loving” with a nod to that Decision and to our years of love and growth as a couple.

Marianne and Jim Houston

We met in a coffee house on campus in Madison, Wisconsin, and spent a happy half-hour over bad coffee and a scarred old table. We fell in like and then in love and were married the next year on campus surrounded by family and friends. It seems to

us that the many differences between us have always been the source of greater growth!

Marianne joined the Loretto Community at 18 and has maintained a lifelong commitment to the charisms of this order of religious sisters; with bachelor's and master's degrees she has been a teacher at all levels for 60+ years and has been a leader in the fields of personal and professional development. Jim's degrees in business and finance and a PhD in political science have led to teaching and leadership in these fields, and the co-founding of a very successful community development credit union. Since leaving McChord Air Force Base in Washington in 1970 we have lived in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where we raised our two sons.

6:45-6:55 After watching the interview and listening to their biography, invite the group to share anything they wish about what they learned from reading this chapter or viewing this clip. **Consider asking**, “What insights did you gain from reading about this relationship and their mixed-race marriage, aging together, bringing together two spiritual traditions and customs?”

6:55-7:10 Next, invite the group to enter a time of silent reflection, writing in their journals on the following questions, based on this chapter: (Note: the rest of the questions are in the Readers' Guide on pages 252-253. We suggest you print and distribute these questions using the handout below, to save time and confusion.)

- *Blessed is the couple who welcomes Divine Presence into their midst, for they shall know Eternal Belonging, grace, and love . . .* is the beatitude that frames Jim & Marianne's story. How does this beatitude speak to you as a couple? How do you welcome Divine Presence into your relationship?

- If your photos could talk, what stories would they reveal about each of your family of origin's cultures, races, and religious backgrounds, and how you have brought them together?

7:10-7:30 After journaling, each couple shares their reflections and discusses these themes. The couples can spread out for more privacy for this conversation.

7:30-7:50 The Group Leaders call the community back to the circle for a discussion. The leader/s invites anyone who wishes to discuss something they want to bring to the large group.

7:50-8:00 Before the closing circle, decide on the date, time, and Table Hosts for your next meeting, as well as who will bring what dish. The next meeting's Table Hosts will send out an email reminder to the group and directions to their home. Remind the group to read Chapter Two in *Side by Side*. Also, describe the following practice to be used in the coming month:

A practice for going deeper in the coming month: Recognizing that the topics introduced at this meeting may require more reflection than we had time for, you are encouraged to continue the conversation at home by journaling and discussing the other questions that go with this chapter. Read aloud the following:

If you wish to go deeper while working with the themes introduced in this meeting, continue to share stories about your early relationship and the cultures and spiritual traditions you brought together. Reflect on their impact on you over time. How have you evolved and changed your relationships with the Creator? Write your stories down, or record them to share with your children and grandchildren if they have not heard them. Research claims that families who share their stories are more resilient and stable.

8:00-8:10 Closing Circle. Invite anyone who wishes to briefly state, in a sentence or two, what has touched them during this gathering, how they may have felt challenged, an insight they are taking away from the group, or simply how they are feeling. You may end the session with “The Beatitudes for Couples” or a poem or song selected by the group leaders.



**Handout for Session One for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Addressing the Themes in Chapter One: Jim & Marianne Houston**

Reflection Questions:

• *Blessed is the couple who welcomes Divine Presence into their midst, for they shall know Eternal Belonging, grace, and love...* is the beatitude that frames Jim and Marianne's story. How does this beatitude speak to you as a couple? How do you welcome Divine Presence into your relationship?

• If your photos could talk, what stories would they reveal about each of your family of origin's cultures, races, and religious backgrounds, and how you have brought them together?

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month: Recognizing that the topics introduced at this meeting may require more reflection than we had time for, you are encouraged to continue the conversation at home by journaling and discussing the other questions related to this chapter (in the Readers' Guide).

If you wish to go deeper while working with the themes introduced in this meeting, continue to share stories about your early relationship and the cultures and spiritual traditions you brought together. Reflect on their impact on you over time. How have you evolved and changed your relationships with the Creator? Write your stories down, or record them to share with your children and grandchildren if they have not heard them. Research claims that families who share their stories are more resilient and stable.



**Meeting Two for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Addressing the Themes in Chapter Two: Caryl & Jeff Creswell**

*Blessed is the couple who embraces all seasons of life—the perennial cycles of
spring, summer, autumn, and winter—
for they shall know wholeness.*

Table Hosts: The table hosts welcome the guests. As you settle down, share an overview of the evening with the group, which includes beginning with a prayer, song, or poem and then, while enjoying the meal, telling a story about your relationship based on the "Table Talk" suggestion. Offer a gentle reminder about how this invitation is optional and that no one should share if they do not want to.

Below are the agenda and instructions for leading this gathering, with a flexible timeline that gives you an idea of the flow of the evening. The Table Hosts facilitate the first half of the evening, and then the Circle of Trust leaders will conduct the second half.

5:00-6:30 Dinner

After reading the blessing, poem or playing a song, enjoy your meal and begin to share stories based on the following prompt.



Table Talk Story Suggestion: Share a story that captures your family of origin's relationship with and traditions around food, dining, meals, and cooking. Discuss how it may have differed from your partner's customs. What have you created together in terms of preparing and sharing food?

After the meal and storytelling are concluded, take a quick break and invite the group to reconvene in the meeting/living room.

6:30-6:35 Circle of Trust Group Leaders: As you settle down in the living room, as a transition from supper to a time for a book discussion, remind the group that we are now creating a Circle of Trust based on the practices embodied in the Touchstones to explore the second chapter in the book. Be sure everyone has something to write on and with and a copy of the Touchstones. **Then, read the Touchstones.**

6:35-6:45 For a brief check-in, ask if anyone would like to share about practicing the "homework" for going deeper from the last meeting or how they have been living with the themes we discussed.

6:45-6:55 Announce that you will show the video clip that goes with this chapter, where you will meet Caryl & Jeff Creswell, who live in Portland, Oregon. To view this clip, bring a laptop computer and go to the *Side by Side* link: www.sidebysideeaging.com. When you get to the site, on the menu bar at the top of the page, you will find "Interviews." Click on that, then scroll down to the interview with Jeff & Caryl. Their interview lasts 6:08 minutes. If you can connect your laptop to a TV, it will be easier to see, but it is not necessary. You can also read their description below, which places where they live, and how they came together as a couple.

Caryl & Jeff Creswell

*To live in this world you must be able to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go, to let it go.*

Mary Oliver

Caryl came to see Jeff about participating in a Courage and Renewal retreat series for clergy and lay leaders. Both widowed, they found a deep connection around

children, spirituality, and an evolving Christian faith. Caryl has served as a Quaker pastor and is a Godly Play trainer working to develop this Montessori-based religious education program nationally and internationally, especially in Spanish-speaking countries. After a thirty-two-year career as an elementary school teacher, Jeff now shares the Scottish Storyline method of curriculum integration with teachers around the world. Together they facilitate Courage and Renewal retreats as well as doing Godly Play trainings. They call Portland, Oregon home and love their little bungalow in northeast Portland where they often welcome their eight children and their friends.

6:55-7:05 After viewing the interview and listening to the biography of Caryl & Jeff, invite the group to share anything they wish about what they observed or learned from reading this chapter or viewing the video clip. **Consider asking**, "What insights did you gain from reading about this relationship where they met later in life, after both being widowed, bringing their large families together, as well as facing the challenging diagnosis of Caryl's Parkinson's Disease?"

7:05-7:15 Next, invite the group to enter a time of silent reflection in their journals on the following questions, based on this chapter: (Note: you can read these questions aloud or remind the group that they are printed in the Readers' Guide on page 253-255, or print them and distribute them.)

- *Blessed is the couple who embraces all seasons of life—the perennial cycles of spring, summer, autumn, and winter—for they shall know wholeness . . .* is the beatitude for Caryl & Jeff. How does this beatitude speak to you as a couple? What season are you in at this time?
- Discuss ways you are "caretaking" for each other. Has this changed with age? What discussions have you had about how to care for one another, and what are your wishes for future health developments? Imagine what it would look like to respect each other's dignity in the process. What comes to mind? What would you want and need when receiving care?

7:15-7:35 After journaling, each couple shares their reflections and discusses these themes. The couples can spread out for more privacy for this conversation.

7:35-7:50 The Circle of Trust Group Leaders call the group back to the circle for a group discussion. The leader/s invites anyone who wishes to share to discuss something they want to bring to the large group.

7:50-8:00 Before the closing circle, decide on the date, time, and Table Hosts for your next meeting and who will bring what dish. The next meeting's Table Hosts will send an email reminder to the group and directions to their home. Also, remind the group to read Chapter Three in *Side by Side*. Finally, read aloud the following practice for next month (which is printed on the handout):

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month: Recognizing that the topics introduced at this meeting may require more reflection than we had time for, you are encouraged to continue the conversation at home and journal on the other questions related to this chapter (found in the Readers' Guide in *Side by Side*).

Consider the "Four Wondering Questions" from Godly Play that Caryl & Jeff discuss in their chapter. Each evening, take some time to answer one or more of them and then share, taking turns listening to one another without interruptions. Can you imagine using this practice to stay current with each other and yourselves? Would you change the questions or add to them?

The Four Wondering Questions

What was the best part of the day?

What was the most important part of the day?

What was just for you?

What could you have left out?

8:00-8:10 Closing Circle Invite anyone who wishes to briefly state, in a sentence or two, what has touched them during this time, an insight they are taking away from the group, or simply how they are feeling. You may end the session with "The Beatitudes for Couples" or a poem or song selected by the host.



**Handout for Meeting Two for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Caryl & Jeff Creswell**

Reflection Questions:

- *Blessed is the couple who embraces all seasons of life—the perennial cycles of spring, summer, autumn, and winter—for they shall know wholeness . . .* is the beatitude for Caryl and Jeff. How does this beatitude speak to you as a couple? What season are you in at this time in your relationship?

- Discuss ways you are "caretaking" for each other. Has this changed with age? What discussions have you had about how to care for one another, and what are your wishes for future health developments? Imagine what it would look like to respect each other's dignity in the process. What comes to mind? What would you want and need when receiving care?

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month: Recognizing that the topics introduced at this meeting may require more reflection than we had time for, you are encouraged to continue the conversation at home and journal on the other questions that go with this chapter (found in the Readers' Guide in *Side by Side*).

Consider the "Four Wondering Questions" from Godly Play that Caryl & Jeff discuss in their chapter. Each evening, take some time to answer one or more of them and then share, taking turns listening to one another without interruptions. Can you imagine using this practice to stay current with each other and yourselves? Would you change the questions or add to them?

The Four Wondering Questions

What was the best part of the day?

What was the most important part of the day?

What was just for you?

What could you have left out?



Meeting Three for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Addressing the Themes in Chapter Three:
Laurie Rutenberg & Gary Schoenberg

*Blessed is the couple who welcomes the stranger in
each other, for they shall find wonder and
encouragement on their growing edges.*

Table Hosts: The table hosts welcome the guests. As you settle down, share an overview of the evening with the group, which includes beginning with a prayer, song, or poem and then, while enjoying the meal, telling a story about your relationship based on the "Table Talk" suggestion. Offer a gentle reminder about how this invitation is optional and that no one should share if they do not want to.

Below is the agenda and instructions for leading this gathering. The timeline is flexible but gives you an idea of the flow of the evening. The Table Hosts will facilitate the first half of the evening, and then the Circle of Trust leaders will conduct the second half.

5:00-6:30 Dinner

After reading the blessing, poem, or playing a song, enjoy your meal and begin to share stories based on the following prompt.



Table Talk Story Suggestion: Share a story about when you underwent an adventure together, i.e., a volunteer project, a memorable vacation, or a pilgrimage. Please include what you thought the journey would be and what it

became, including detours, losing your way, surprising discoveries, hidden treasures, etc.

After the meal and storytelling are concluded, take a quick break and invite the group to reconvene in the meeting/living room.

6:30-6:35 Circle of Trust Group Leaders: As you settle down in the living room, as a transition from supper to a book discussion, remind the group that we are now creating a Circle of Trust based on the practices embodied in the Touchstones to explore the third chapter in the book. Be sure everyone has a copy of the Touchstones and something to write on and write with. **Then, read the Touchstones.**

6:35-6:45 For a brief check-in, ask if anyone would like to share about practicing the "homework" for going deeper from the last meeting, or how they have been living with the themes we discussed.

6:45-6:55 Announce that you will show the video clip that goes with this chapter, where you will meet Laurie Rutenberg & Gary Schoenberg from Portland, Oregon. To view this clip, bring a laptop computer and go to the *Side by Side* link: www.sidebysideaging.com. When you get to the site, on the menu bar at the top of the page, you will find "Interviews." Click on that, then scroll down to the interview with Gary & Laurie. Their interview lasts 5:28 minutes. If you can connect your laptop to a TV, it will be easier to see, but it is not necessary. You can also read their description below, which places where they live, and how they came together as a couple.

Laurie and Gary provided this biography to the authors while we were writing their stories.

Rabbi Laurie Rutenberg & Rabbi Gary Shoenburg

*For the unlearned, old age is winter;
for the learned it is the season of the harvest.*

The Talmud

Laurie Rutenberg and Gary Schoenberg met in Jerusalem during their first year in rabbinical school. They didn't hit it off. It took five years for them to discover a love and partnership that has made for an amazing journey. Together, they have encountered the challenges of infertility (their children are both in vitro babies), the deaths of two of Gary's younger brothers and all of their parents, and faced the challenges of parenting set against the demands of their workplace. They have managed to make their home, which they lovingly call "Gesher—A Bridge Home," the center of building a bridge back to Jewish life, the Jewish people, and Jewish learning in Portland, Oregon. They have welcomed over 8,500 different individuals to their family's Shabbat and holiday dinner table. Amidst afflictions of greed, war, displacement, and loneliness, they have celebrated a life's work and life's partnership that have built a village and made for a vibrant home life.

They live in Portland, Oregon and enjoy their relationship with their two adult children and grandchildren. Their website is: <http://www.ourjewishhome.org/who-we-are>

6:55-7:05 After watching the interview and/or listening to their biography, invite the group to share anything they wish about what they learned from reading this chapter or viewing the video clip. **Consider asking**, "How do you show love to each other in your relationship? How do you witness how you have noticed each other's growth? Can you imagine writing a Teshuva letter to one another?"

7:05-7:15 Next, invite the group to enter a time of silent reflection in your journals on the following questions, based on this chapter: (Note: You can read these questions aloud; remind the group that they are printed in the Readers' Guide on pages 255-256, or print them and distribute them.)

- *Blessed is the couple who welcomes the stranger in each other, for they will find wonder and encouragement on their growing edges . . . is the beatitude for Gary & Laurie. How does this speak to you? In what ways have you become strangers to one another? Have you undergone long periods of estrangement? What creates estrangement and distance in your relationship?*

- In what ways do you invite the Sabbath to "keep you"? Where does "Sabbath" live in your lives, alone and together, i.e., creating time for silence and prayer, breaking bread, telling stories, being in nature, blessing your children, slowing down, and practicing devotion?

7:15-7:35 After journaling, each couple shares their reflections and discusses these themes. The couples can spread out for more privacy for this conversation.

7:35-7:50 The Circle of Trust Leaders call the couples back for a large group discussion. The leader/s invites anyone who wishes to speak to something they want to bring to the large group.

7:50-8:00 Before the closing circle, decide on the date, time, and Table Hosts for your next meeting and who will bring what dish. The next meeting's Table Hosts will send an email reminder to the group and directions to their home. Remind the group to read Chapter Four in *Side by Side*. Also, read aloud the following practice for next month:

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month: Recognizing that the topics introduced at this meeting may require more reflection than we had time for, you are encouraged to continue the conversation at home and journal on the other questions related to this chapter (found in the Readers' Guide in *Side by Side*).

Write a Teshuvah letter to one another, as described by the rabbis, and then light a candle, turn off the phones and computers, and read them aloud to each other. If you wish, then write Teshuvah letters to your children. Below is a brief description, taken from their chapter:

Gary and I have created a practice that helps us as a couple and as a family with the process of forgiveness. It is built upon our understanding of the richness and fruitfulness of the traditional experience of the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur, also known as the 'Sabbath of Sabbaths,' the holiest day of the year in Judaism. Its central themes are repentance and atonement. It is a day when the entire Jewish community asks for and supports one another in praying for forgiveness for all our wrongs of the previous year, but we do this

with an understanding that God will not be forgiving for wrongs if we haven't first made amends with the other person, and then asked them for forgiveness.

In this context, Gary wrote a letter to me, early in our marriage, in anticipation of Yom Kippur, about the things he regretted and was sorry for. Soon after, we began an annual practice of writing letters to one another, which we call Teshuvah letters. Teshuvah means "return" or realignment with what is holy in each of us, but is really about the repair of our soul with the Holy One, realigning with our best selves. We have written these letters every year (addressing the Holy One, and each other). This became so deeply beautiful and meaningful that when we had children, we expanded the practice and started to write to our children as well. From the time of their infancy through today (thirty-three years later), we tell them in these letters:

- How we have witnessed both their growth and also their struggles.
- How we are proud of them. Our goal is to give them love, guidance, and courage.
- We also share the actions that we regret, say how we will try to make amends, and ask for forgiveness. We say 'I'm sorry,' and that we love them.
- We name the ways we have seen growth in each other, too.

I write these letters out of love, and I feel very loved in receiving them from Gary. Gary or I write the letters at other times during the year as well, if a moment seems to call for them.

8:00-8:10 Closing Circle Invite anyone who wishes to briefly state, in a sentence or two, what has touched them during this time, an insight they are taking away from the group, or simply how they are feeling. You may end the session with "The Beatitudes for Couples," or a poem or song selected by the group leaders.



Handout for Meeting Three for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Laurie Rutenberg & Gary Schoenberg

Reflection Questions:

- *Blessed is the couple who welcomes the stranger in each other, for they will find wonder and encouragement on their growing edges . . .* is the beatitude for Gary and Laurie. How does this speak to you? In what ways have you become strangers to one another? Have you undergone long periods of estrangement? What creates estrangement and distance in your relationship?
- In what ways do you invite the Sabbath to “keep you”? Where does “Sabbath” live in your lives, alone and together, i.e., creating time for silence, breaking bread, telling stories, being in nature, blessing your children, slowing down, and practicing devotion?

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month: Write a Teshuvah letter to one another, as described by the rabbis, and then light a candle, turn off the phones and computers, and read them aloud to each other. If you wish, then write Teshuvah letters to your children. Below is a brief description taken from their chapter.

Gary and I have created a practice that helps us as a couple and as a family with the process of forgiveness. It is built upon our understanding of the richness and fruitfulness of the traditional experience of the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur, also known as the ‘Sabbath of Sabbaths,’ the holiest day of the year in Judaism. Its central themes are repentance and atonement. It is a day when the entire Jewish community asks for and supports one another in praying for forgiveness for all our wrongs of the previous year, but we do this with an understanding that God will not be forgiving for wrongs if we haven’t first made amends with the other person, and then asked them for forgiveness.

In this context, Gary wrote a letter to me, early in our marriage, in anticipation of Yom Kippur, about the things he regretted and was sorry for. Soon after, we began an annual practice of writing letters to one another, which we call Teshuvah letters. Teshuvah means “return” or realignment with what is holy in each of us, but is really about the repair of our soul with the Holy One, realigning with our best selves. We have written these letters every year (addressing the Holy One, and each other). This became so deeply beautiful and meaningful that when we had children, we expanded the practice and started to write to our children as well. From the time of their infancy through today (thirty-three years later), we tell them in these letters:

- How we have witnessed both their growth and also their struggles.
- How we are proud of them. Our goal is to give them love, guidance, and courage.
- We also share the actions that we regret, say how we will try to make amends, and ask for forgiveness. We say ‘I’m sorry,’ and that we love them.
- We name the ways we have seen growth in each other, too.



**Meeting Four for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Addressing the Themes in Chapter Four: Paul & Roz Dumesnil**

*Blessed is the couple who confronts their own shadows,
for they shall be freed from blame and projection.*

Table Hosts: The table hosts welcome the guests. As you settle down, share an overview of the evening with the group, beginning with a prayer, song, or poem. Then, while enjoying the meal, tell a story about your relationship based on the "Table Talk" suggestion. Offer a gentle reminder about how this invitation is optional and that no one should share if they do not want to.

Below are the agenda and instructions for leading this gathering, with a flexible timeline that gives you an idea of the flow of the evening. The Table Hosts will facilitate the first half of the evening, and then the Circle of Trust leaders will lead the second half.

5:00-6:30: Dinner

After reading the blessing, poem, or playing a song, enjoy your meal and begin to share stories based on the following prompt.



Table Talk Story Suggestion: Share a story that captures how aging together impacts you and your relationship, both in positive and challenging ways . . . stories that reflect what your age is asking of you at this time as a couple.

After the meal and storytelling are concluded, take a quick break and invite the group to reconvene in the meeting/living room.

6:30-6:35 Circle of Trust Group Leaders: As you settle down in the living room, as a transition from supper to a book discussion, remind the group that we are now creating a Circle of Trust based on the practices embodied in the Touchstones to explore the fourth chapter in the book. Be sure everyone has a copy of the Touchstones and something to write on and with. **Then, read the Touchstones.**

6:35-6:45 For a brief check-in, ask if anyone would like to share about practicing the "homework" for going deeper from the last meeting, or how they have been living with the themes we discussed.

6:45-6:55 Announce that you will show the video clip that goes with this chapter, where you will meet Roz & Paul Dumsnil. To view this clip, bring a laptop computer and go to *the Side by Side* link: www.sidebysideaging.com. When you get to the site, on the menu bar at the top of the page you will find "Interviews." Click on that, then scroll down to the interview with Paul & Roz. Their interview lasts 5.43 minutes. If you can connect your laptop to a TV, it will be easier to see, but it is not necessary. You can also read their description below, which places where they live, and how they came together as a couple.

Paul & Roz Dumesnil

*And how we are all preparing for that abrupt waking
and that calling, and that moment we have to say yes!
Except it will not come so grandly, so biblically,
but more subtly, and intimately in the face
of the one you know you have to love.*

David Whyte, "The True Love"

Paul and Roz met at Santa Clara University in 1965, the first week of their freshman year. From the start, they were drawn to one another by their mutual desire for a deeper relationship with God. Today, after 50 years of marriage, that passion prevails, coloring the rich connections they enjoy with family and friends as well as their shared enthusiasm for travel, sports, and the arts. Prior to transitioning into pastoral ministry, Paul enjoyed a thirty-year career in banking, specializing in

construction and real estate lending as well as private wealth management. Roz's work was centered on public relations and fundraising for non-profit organizations, followed by a segue into a ministry that culminated in teaching. Today they are both spiritual directors, practicing out of their home. In order to be closer to their nine grandchildren, they relocated to Palo Alto in 2016.

(A year after we interviewed them, Roz passed away from pancreatic cancer.)

6:55-7:05 After watching the interview and/or listening to their biography, invite the group to share anything they wish about what they learned from reading this chapter or viewing the video clip. Consider asking, "How do you seek Spirit amid your challenges?"

7:05-7:15 Next, invite the group to enter a time of silent reflection in your journals on the following questions, based on this chapter: (Note: you can read these questions aloud; remind the group that they are printed in the Readers' Guide on pages 256-257, or print and distribute them.)

- *Blessed is the couple who confronts their own shadows, for they shall be freed from blame and projection . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. How does it speak to your experience? How do you know when you are projecting a "shadow"* (the parts of you that you don't want to own and can't entirely see) onto your partner? Speaking for yourself, what is your most challenging quality or qualities that your partner must live with, a personality trait that won't change?
*see attachment titled "Befriending the Shadow" for a longer definition.
- Reflecting on your parents' deaths, how have they been teachers to you? Has your experience with the dying verified the saying, "You die as you live"?

7:15-7:35 After journaling, each couple shares their reflections and discusses these themes. The couples can spread out for more privacy for this conversation.

7:35-7:50 The Circle of Trust Leaders call the group back to the circle for a large group discussion. The leader/s invites anyone who wishes to discuss something they would like to bring to the large group.

7:50-8:00 Before the closing circle, decide on the date, time, and Table Hosts for your next meeting and who will bring what dish. The next meeting's Table Hosts will send an email reminder to the group and directions to their home. Also, remind the group to read Chapter Five in *Side by Side*. Then, read aloud the following practice for next month (printed on the handout):

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month: Recognizing that the topics introduced at this meeting may require more reflection than we had time for, you are encouraged to continue the conversation at home and journal on the other questions related to this chapter (found in the Readers' Guide in *Side by Side*).

One of the most powerful questions we asked the couples during the interviews was, "Share the story of your parents' transitions from this life." Take some time to write out or share in detail how your parents died. Explore where you were, your role, and how you felt. Consider what messages or learning you gained from witnessing their transitions. This is a good time to discuss what you hope your end of life might look like if you have not already done so.

Finally, we experience the privilege of hearing Roz's final words at the end of this chapter. Reread her final words on pages 76-77; then, each of you writes what you would like your final words to be and then read them to each other. If you wish, discuss what you would want for your memorial service, i.e., songs, speakers, readings, officiant, and setting. If you haven't completed a Health Care Advance Directive, this is a great time to download one online and work through this document together. This can assist those caring for you to follow your wishes for your end-of-life care, sparing them from having to guess what you would want when you can't communicate with them.

8:00-8:10 Closing Circle Invite anyone who wishes to briefly state, in a sentence or two, what has touched them during this time, an insight they are taking away from the group, or simply how they are feeling. You may end the session with "The Beatitudes for Couples" or a poem or song selected by the host.



**Handout for Meeting Four for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Paul & Roz Dumesnil**

Reflection Questions:

- *Blessed is the couple who confronts their own shadows, for they shall be freed from blame and projection . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. How does it speak to your experience? How do you know when you are projecting a "shadow"* (the parts of you that you don't want to own and can't entirely see) onto your partner? Speaking for yourself, what is your most challenging quality or qualities that your partner must live with, a personality trait that won't change?

*see the attachment titled: "Befriending the Shadow" for a longer definition.

- Reflecting on your parents' deaths, how have they been teachers to you? Has your experience with the dying verified the saying, "You die as you live"?

A Practice for Going Deeper for the Coming Month: Recognizing that the topics introduced at this meeting may require more reflection than we had time for, you are encouraged to continue the conversation at home and journal on the other questions related to this chapter (found in the Readers' Guide in *Side by Side*).

One of the most powerful questions we asked the couples during the interviews was, "Share the story of your parents' transitions from this life." Take some time to write out or share in detail how your parents died. Explore where you were, your role, and how you felt. Consider what messages or learning you gained from witnessing their transitions. This is a good time to discuss what you hope your end of life might look like if you have not already done so.

Finally, we experience the privilege of hearing Roz's final words at the end of this chapter. Reread her final words on pages 76-77; then, each of you writes what you would like your final words to be and then read them to each other. If you wish, discuss what you would want for your memorial service, i.e., songs, speakers, readings, officiant, and setting. If you haven't completed a Health Care Advance Directive, this is a great time to download one online and work through this document together. This can assist those caring for you to follow your wishes for your end-of-life care, sparing them from having to guess what you would want when you can't communicate with them.



**Meeting Five for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Addressing the Themes in Chapter Five: Steve & Faye Orton Snyder**

*Blessed is the couple who listens deeply to each other,
for they shall be seen, understood, and met.*

Table Hosts: The Table Hosts welcome the guests. As you settle down, share an overview of the evening with the group, which includes beginning with a prayer, song, or poem and then, while enjoying the meal, telling a story about your relationship based on the "Table Talk" suggestion. Offer a gentle reminder about how this invitation is optional and that no one should share if they do not want to.

Below is the agenda and instructions for leading this gathering. The timeline is flexible but gives you an idea of the flow of the evening. The Table Hosts will facilitate the first half of the evening, and then the Circle of Trust leaders will conduct the second half.

5:00-6:30 Dinner

After reading the blessing, poem, or playing a song, enjoy your meal and begin to share stories based on the following prompt.



Table Talk Story Suggestion: Share a story about a challenge, loss, trial, or ordeal you have undergone together and how it tested your relationship, changed you, and what you learned in the process.

6:30-8:00 After the meal and storytelling are concluded, take a quick break and invite the group to reconvene in the meeting/living room.

6:30-6:35 Circle of Trust Group Leaders: As you settle down in the living room, as a transition from supper to a book discussion, remind the group that we are now creating a Circle of Trust based on the practices embodied in the Touchstones to explore the fifth chapter in the book. Be sure everyone has a copy of the Touchstones and something to write on and write with. **Then, read the Touchstones.**

6:35-6:45 For a brief check-in, ask if anyone would like to share about practicing the "homework" for going deeper from the last meeting, or how they have been living with the themes we discussed.

6:45-6:55 Announce that you will show the video clip that goes with this chapter, where you meet Steve & Faye. To view this clip, bring a laptop computer and go to the *Side by Side* link: www.sidebysideaging.com. When you get to the site, on the menu bar at the top of the page, you will find "Interviews." Click on that, then scroll down to the interview with Steve & Faye. Their interview lasts 6:45 minutes. If you can connect your laptop to a TV, it will be easier to see, but it is not necessary. You can also read their description below, which places where they live, and how they came together as a couple.

Here is Faye & Steve's biography, which they provided to the authors.

Steve & Faye Orton Snyder

*You may not remember the time you let me go first.
Or the time you dropped back to tell me it wasn't that far to go.
Or the time you waited at the crossroads for me to catch up.*

You may not remember any of those, but I do, and this is what I have to say to you:

*Today, no matter what it takes,
we ride home together.*

Brian Andreas, Story People

Faye and Steve – each then in their 60's — fell in love and married in 2009. By that time, their two families had been close friends for 38 years, and Faye and Steve each had lost a spouse to illness. Wrapped in the comfort of their love and those many years of friendship, their marriage became a joyful adventure of two kindred souls

living out thoughtful vows to make the most of their autumn years and to ride home together. Faye, after retiring in 2009 after three decades of service as pastor of the Lafayette Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), designs and leads retreats and monthly Circles of Trust for Bay Area congregations and faith leaders. Steve, who retired from 47 years as a lawyer and law teacher, has turned his attention to family matters. Together, Steve and Faye have seven children and seventeen grandchildren and live in the San Francisco East Bay suburb of Lafayette.

6:55-7:05 After watching the interview or listening to their biography, invite the group to share anything they wish about what they learned from reading this chapter or viewing the video clip. **Consider asking**, "When do you feel most loved by your partner?"

7:05-7:15 Next, invite the group to enter a time of silent reflection in your journals on the following questions, based on this chapter: (Note: you can read these questions aloud; remind the group that they are printed in the Readers' Guide on page 258, or print them and distribute them.)

- *Blessed is the couple who listens deeply to each other, for they shall be seen, understood, and met . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. When you consider your listening to one another, with your minds, bodies, hearts, and souls, how is it going? Where might you improve?
- From reading about the "geography of loss" in Steve & Faye's lives, consider your collective "geography of loss" as a couple. What list of names would you carry in your wallet? How have you learned to carry loss?

7:15-7:35 After journaling, each couple shares their reflections and discusses these themes. The couples can spread out for more privacy for this conversation.

7:35-7:50 The Circle of Trust Leaders call the group back to the circle for a large group discussion. The leader/s invites anyone who wishes to discuss something they want to bring to the large group.

7:50-8:00 Before the closing circle, decide on the date, time, and Table Hosts for your next meeting, as well as who will bring what dish. The next meeting's Table Hosts will send an email reminder to the group and directions to their home. Also, remind the group to read Chapter Six in *Side by Side*. Finally, read aloud the following practice for next month:

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month: Recognizing that the topics introduced at this meeting may require more reflection than we had time for, you are encouraged to continue the conversation at home and journal on the other questions related to this chapter (found in the Readers' Guide in *Side by Side*).

With the focus on listening and being vulnerable with one another, for this month, each of you create an "inner witness" and be watchful regarding your communication. Focus on listening to understand without commenting or jumping in. Try "empathic listening," where you put yourself in your partner's shoes and imagine how they are feeling and experiencing this situation. Remember the Touchstone, "No fixing, no advising, and no correcting each other." When you are puzzled about what your partner has said, try asking an open, honest question instead of jumping in with a judgment, and then see how it goes. Ask simple questions like, "Could you say more about that?" or "Please share why this is important to you?" If one of you has a concern, remember: behind every complaint is a request. Ask questions that lead you to an understanding of what the request might be.

Create some times to invite a conversation about how your communication is going. Ask, "How are we doing? What is working? When did I feel heard? Did I risk speaking my truth, or not? Was I present? Was I vulnerable?" It takes courage to be honest, but it is worth it. Note patterns and discuss them. Remember that you are both doing the best you can, and you can use this time to focus on communication to deepen your relationship.

8:00-8:10 Closing Circle Invite anyone who wishes to briefly state, in a sentence or two, what has touched them during this time, an insight they are taking away from the group, or simply how they are feeling. You may end the session with "The Beatitudes for Couples," a poem or song selected by the group leaders.

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month: Recognizing that the topics introduced at this meeting may require more reflection than we had time for, you are encouraged to continue the conversation at home and journal on the other questions that go with this chapter (found in the Readers' Guide in *Side by Side*).

With the focus on listening and being vulnerable with one another, for this month, each of you create an "inner witness" and be watchful regarding your communication. Focus on listening to understand without commenting or jumping in. Try "empathic listening," where you put yourself in your partner's shoes and imagine how they are feeling and experiencing this situation. Remember the Touchstone, "No fixing, no advising, and no correcting each other." When you are puzzled about what your partner has said, try asking an open, honest question instead of jumping in with a judgment, and then see how it goes. Ask simple questions like, "Could you say more about that?" or "Please share why this is important to you?" If one of you has a concern, remember: behind every complaint is a request. Ask questions that lead you to an understanding of what the request might be.

Create some times to invite a conversation about how your communication is going. Ask, "How are we doing? What is working? When did I feel heard? Did I risk speaking my truth, or not? Was I present? Was I vulnerable?" It takes courage to be honest, but it is worth it. Note patterns and discuss them. Remember that you are both doing the best you can, and you can use this time to focus on communication to deepen your relationship.



**Meeting Six for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Addressing the Themes in Chapter Six
Bobby Bellamy & Barbara Blain-Bellamy**

Blessed is the couple who practices compassion, for they shall honor the Spark of the Divine in all of their brothers and sisters.

Table Hosts: The table hosts welcome the guests. As you settle down, share an overview of the evening with the group, beginning with a prayer, song, or poem and then, while enjoying the meal, telling a story about your relationship based on the "Table Talk" suggestion. Offer a gentle reminder about how this invitation is optional and that no one should share if they do not want to.

Below is the agenda and instructions for leading this gathering. The timeline is flexible but gives you an idea of the flow of the evening. The Table Hosts will facilitate the first half of the evening, and then the Circle of Trust leaders will conduct the second half.

5:00-6:30 Dinner

After reading the blessing, poem, or playing a song, enjoy your meal and begin to share stories based on the following prompt.



Table Talk Story Suggestion: In this chapter, Barbara shares a story of a mystical experience. By way of definition, she says “a mystical experience is one beyond what is ordinary, even unexplainable, like an out-of-body experience, or knowing something we cannot justify knowing.” Share a story about a time one or both of you have received a mystical experience.

After the meal and storytelling are concluded, take a quick break and invite the group to reconvene in the living room.

6:30-6:35 Circle of Trust Group Leaders: As you settle down in the living room, as a transition from supper to a book discussion, remind the group that we are now creating a Circle of Trust based on the practices embodied in the Touchstones to explore the sixth chapter in the book. Be sure everyone has a copy of the Touchstones and something to write on and write with. **Then, read the Touchstones.**

6:35-6:45 For a brief check-in, ask if anyone would like to share about practicing the "homework" for going deeper from the last meeting, or how they have been living with the themes we discussed.

6:45-6:55 Announce that you will show the video clip that goes with this chapter, where you will meet Barbara & Bobby Bellamy. To view this clip, bring a laptop computer and go to the *Side by Side* link: www.sidebysideaging.com. When you get to the site, on the menu bar at the top of the page, you will find "Interviews." Click on that, then scroll down to the interview with Bobby & Barbara. Their interview lasts 6:47 minutes. If you can connect your laptop to a TV, it will be easier to see, but it is not necessary. You can also read their description below, which places where they live, and how they came together as a couple.

Barbara and Bobby provided their biography to the authors while we were writing their story:

Barbara & Bobby Bellamy

Fifty years ago we didn't even try to imagine the year 2020, or us as aged people. But God did. . . . He imagined and orchestrated a very good life for us two. He did a marvelous and wondrous job! All praise and honor are His!

We were terribly mismatched. With an (almost) lifelong familiarity, there had been (for decades) no attraction between us. Actually, there was more disdain than anything.

Late in life (a mere five years ago), a providential series of events put us in a car together for several hours, and we shared a meal. Bobby showed himself as vulnerable; Barbara opened her heart. In no time, we were inseparable. We then feared that our shared condition, loneliness, may have clouded the earlier barrier that protected us from each other and tilted dismal views of each other. A brief reprieve ended the fear. We knew our love was real and worthy of our time and energies. We remain a couple because we love, honor, and need each other. We know we approach life better with the other at our side! Bobby was USAF—a 'lifer' of 28 years, retiring as Chief Master Sergeant (1967-1995).

Barbara has been a social worker for 25 years, going to law school just before turning fifty. As a lawyer, she focuses on criminal and domestic law. She was first elected to her city council in 1992 and has recently begun a second four-year term as mayor. They live in Conway, SC, the place of their humble beginnings.

6:55-7:05 After watching the interview or listening to their description as a couple, invite the group to share anything they wish about what they learned from reading this chapter or viewing the video clip. **Consider asking**, "What does it look like to cooperate with your aging versus resisting it?" or, "How do you practice compassion in your relationship? Do you struggle with being judgmental?"

7:05-7:15 Next, invite the group to enter a time of silent reflection in your journals on the following questions, based on this chapter: (Note: you can read these questions aloud; remind the group that they are printed in the Readers' Guide on page 259, or print them and distribute them.)

- *Blessed is the couple who practices compassion, for they shall honor the Spark of the Divine in all of their brothers and sisters . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. Where in your relationship are you most in need of compassion now?

- Barbara names a habit of judging others as interfering with her practice of treating people with compassion. What inner quality gets in your way of loving others and extending compassion? What interferes with your love and compassion as a couple?

7:15-7:35 After journaling, each couple shares their reflections and discusses these themes. The couples can spread out for more privacy for this conversation.

7:35-7:50 The Circle of Trust Leaders call the group back to the circle for a large group discussion. The leader/s invites anyone who wishes to discuss something they want to bring to the large group.

7:50-8:00 Before the closing circle, decide on the date, time, and Table Hosts for your next meeting and who will bring what dish. The next meeting's Table Hosts will send out an email reminder to the group and directions to their home. Also, remind the group to read Chapter Seven in *Side by Side*. Finally, read aloud the following practice for next month:

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month: Recognizing that the topics introduced at this meeting may require more reflection than we had time for, you are encouraged to continue the conversation at home and journal on the other questions related to this chapter (found in the Readers' Guide in *Side by Side*).

Barbara shares a powerful story about how she moved from judgment to compassion and humility when watching a woman rescue a baby turtle crossing the road. Judgment is hardwired into us, and it is easy for couples to judge each other habitually. This month, practice watching your spoken or unspoken judgments of your partner and, using the inner witness, look for patterns in your judgments. The Touchstone, "Turn to wonder," is helpful when watching your judging patterns. Instead of condemning your partner's behavior, turn to wonder by asking questions like, "I wonder why she said that? I wonder why I overreacted. What might I ask that would lead me to a deeper understanding? What story am I telling about this behavior?" As the month progresses, share your insights and learning with each other.

8:00-8:10 Closing Circle. Invite anyone who wishes to briefly state, in a sentence or two, what has touched them during this time, an insight they are taking away from the group, or simply how they are feeling. You may end the session with "The Beatitudes for Couples" or a poem or song selected by the group leaders.



Handout for Meeting Six for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Bobby Bellamy & Barbara Blain-Bellamy

Reflection Questions:

- *Blessed is the couple who practices compassion, for they shall honor the Spark of the Divine in all of their brothers and sisters . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. Where in your relationship are you most in need of compassion at this time?

- Barbara names a habit of judging others as interfering with her practice of treating people with compassion. What inner quality gets in your way of loving others and extending compassion? What interferes with your love and compassion as a couple?

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month: Recognizing that the topics introduced at this meeting may require more reflection than we had time for, you are encouraged to continue the conversation at home and journal on the other questions related to this chapter (found in the Readers' Guide in *Side by Side*).

Barbara shares a powerful story about how she moved from judgment to compassion and humility when watching a woman rescue a baby turtle crossing the road. Judgment is hardwired into us, and it is easy for couples to judge each other habitually. This month, practice watching your spoken or unspoken judgments of your partner and, using the inner witness, look for patterns in your judgments. The Touchstone, "Turn to wonder," is helpful when watching your judging patterns. Instead of condemning your partner's behavior, turn to wonder by asking questions like, "I wonder why she said that? I wonder why I overreacted. What might I ask that would lead me to a deeper understanding? What story am I telling about this behavior?" As the month progresses, share your insights and learning with each other.



**Meeting Seven for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Addressing the Themes in Chapter Seven: Sally Hare & Jim Rogers**

*Blessed is the couple who cares about the other's needs as much as their own,
for they shall enjoy the fruits of mutuality.*

Table Hosts: The table hosts welcome the guests. As you settle down, share an overview of the evening with the group, beginning with a prayer, song, or poem and then, while enjoying the meal, telling a story about your relationship based on the "Table Talk" suggestion. Offer a gentle reminder about how this invitation is optional and that no one should share if they do not want to.

Below is the agenda and instructions for leading this gathering. The timeline is flexible but gives you an idea of the flow of the evening. The Table Hosts will facilitate the first half of the evening, and then the Circle of Trust leaders will conduct the second half.

5:00-6:30 Dinner

After reading the blessing, poem, or playing a song, enjoy your meal and begin to share stories based on the following prompt.



Table Talk Story Suggestion: Tell a story that captures what most brings you alive at this time of life. How and where do you find meaning, purpose, and passion as a couple and as individuals?

After the meal and storytelling are concluded, take a quick break and invite the group to reconvene in the living room.

6:30-6:35 Circle of Trust Group Leaders: As you settle down in the living room, as a transition from supper to a book discussion, remind the group that we are now creating a Circle of Trust based on the practices embodied in the Touchstones to explore the seventh chapter in the book. Be sure everyone has a copy of the Touchstones and something to write on and write with. **Then, read the Touchstones.**

6:35-6:45 For a brief check-in, ask if anyone would like to share about practicing the "homework" for going deeper from the last meeting, or how they have been living with the themes we discussed.

6:45-6:55 Announce that you will show the video clip that goes with this chapter, where you will meet Sally & Jim. To view this clip, bring a laptop computer and go to the *Side by Side* link: www.sidebysideaging.com. When you get to the site, on the menu bar at the top of the page, you will find "Interviews." Click on that, then scroll down to the interview with Sally & Jim. Their interview lasts 6:44 minutes. If you can connect your laptop to a TV, it will be easier to see, but it is not necessary. You can also read their description below, which places where they live, and how they came together as a couple.

Below is Jim and Sally's biography, which was provided to the authors while we were writing their story.

Sally Hare & Jim Rogers

We have so many old people and so few elders.

Charles Eisenstein

Sally Z. Hare and Jim R. Rogers met by taking advantage of the opportunity to slip through a tiny "window in time"; if they had blinked, they would have missed it! And now they have gained too much weight to go back through it, so they are happily stuck! Sally is a lifelong teacher and learner, feminist, and activist who loves dogs and her ocean, and thought she was a committed bachelor until, in midlife, she found in Jim, the wife she had always wanted! Jim, after 40 years in television and radio and advertising in Atlanta, Charlotte, New York, and Los Angeles, returned to his

Southern roots with a new career as a family and parenting educator and a passion for helping parents understand the importance of their relationship with their children. They live in the mountain cottage of their dreams on the South Carolina coast, where they are intentionally connecting soul and role to become elders instead of just old.

6:55-7:05 After watching the interview or listening to their description as a couple, invite the group to share anything they wish about what they learned from reading this chapter or viewing the video clip. **Consider asking**, "When Jim said to Sally, 'Your happiness is the key to my happiness,' how did this statement impact you? Do you agree with this sentiment? How have gender roles changed since you came of age, from when you first met to now?"

6:55-7:10 Next, invite the group to enter a time of silent reflection in your journals on the following questions, based on this chapter: (Note: you can read these questions aloud; remind the group that they are printed in the Readers' Guide on pp. 259-260, or print them and distribute them.)

- *Blessed is the couple who cares about the other's needs as much as their own, for they shall enjoy the fruits of mutuality . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. What does mutuality mean to you, and what place does mutuality hold in your relationship? Consider some examples of when you have practiced mutuality in your life choices.
- In these challenging times of climate change, social and political unrest, and changing gender roles and identities, what are you outraged about, and how do you see yourselves addressing these issues now?

7:15-7:35 After journaling, each couple shares their reflections and discusses these themes. The couples can spread out for more privacy for this conversation.

7:35-7:50 The Circle of Trust Leaders call the group back to the circle for a large group discussion. The leader/s invites anyone who wishes to discuss something they want to bring to the large group.

7:50-8:00 Before the closing circle, decide on the date, time, and Table Hosts for your next meeting and who will bring what dish. The next meeting's Table Hosts will send out an email reminder to the group and directions to their home. Also remind the group to read Chapter Eight in *Side by Side*. Also, read aloud the following practice for next month:

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month

*The best decisions result from surfacing different points of view
and searching for creative solutions. We need more conflict.*

William Ury

In this chapter, Sally & Jim share how they met later in life. Sally owned a cozy home two blocks from the sea, while Jim grew up in the lush mountains of North Carolina, where he felt most at home. They found a creative way to care for each other and stay in her house by building a large room onto her ocean cottage, designed like a mountain cabin. This is a beautiful example of mutuality and a powerful reminder that people in healthy relationships make decisions and engage their conflicts and differences in a constructive, creative, collaborative manner. Negotiation and mutuality are about deeply listening, allowing room for creative solutions, and caring about each other throughout the process. Regardless of your decision, you have achieved a significant win if you feel loved and heard at the end of the day.

This month, take some time to review your major life decisions. Consider when you practiced mutuality and healthy conflict resolution while discerning what directions to take. Also, consider some times when you did not achieve mutuality and what that was like. There is always so much to learn from our failures.

If you want to practice achieving mutuality with a decision you are currently facing, try employing the following process:

1. Make a date and set aside quiet, uninterrupted time for your discernment process. When you are rested, sober, and calm, you can create a safe container to discuss your decision and be fully present with each other. In the spirit of

mutuality, acknowledge that you care deeply that each of you will be satisfied with the decision. Acknowledge that it can take as much time as needed so no one feels pressured. Hurrying is never your friend in relationships or decision-making. Finally, pray together for guidance with this decision if this is part of your spiritual practice.

2. First, clearly define and agree upon the nature of the decision, both what it entails and whom it impacts. Consider if there is a ‘third party’ you want to consult or bring in for help. Is there more information needed before you decide? **Take turns** naming your feelings, dreams, thoughts, background information, history, preferences, leanings, etc., about this decision. Articulate what you want as an outcome and name your deepest needs. Address how attached your ego is to getting its way and why it is so. What is your “skin in this game”?
3. **When listening** to your partner, imagine how they are experiencing this situation. **Don’t interrupt.** If you are confused or want a deeper understanding of your partner’s position, ask honest, open questions that evoke more information when they are finished sharing. If you sense that your partner has more to say, ask, "Is there anything else you want to say about this issue?" When your partner is done speaking, paraphrase what you think you heard them say to ensure they feel heard. Clear up any misperceptions before switching roles. Give this step as much time as it needs.

When listening, if you are feeling reactive or angry to the point where you can’t hear your partner, say so; you can call for a time out to settle down and explore your own feelings. We usually say things we regret when triggered.

4. **Employ the Rule of Six:** Once both partners have had a chance to complete steps two and three, now invoke the spirit of creativity and fresh perspectives. Use the "rule of six" and brainstorm at least six possible solutions for your decision. Each person privately makes a list, writes down their ideas, and then shares them. As you listen to this fresh infusion of inspiration and possibilities, sit with the tension of “not knowing.” You may still not be ready to decide.

5. **Until you have arrived** at a sense of mutuality, you continue to hold space for your decision and perhaps repeat these steps. We know we have reached mutuality when we both can say wholeheartedly, “hell yes!” to a decision.

8:00-8:10 Closing Circle Invite anyone who wishes to briefly state, in a sentence or two, what has touched them during this time, an insight they are taking away from the group, or simply how they are feeling. You may end the session with "The Beatitudes for Couples," or a poem or song selected by the group leaders.



Handout for Meeting Seven for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Sally Hare & Jim Rogers

Reflection Questions:

- *Blessed is the couple who cares about the other's needs as much as their own, for they shall enjoy the fruits of mutuality . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. What does mutuality mean to you, and what place does mutuality hold in your relationship? Consider some examples of when you have practiced mutuality in your life choices together.

- In these difficult times of climate change, social, and political unrest, changing gender roles and identities, what are you outraged about, and how do you see yourselves addressing these issues now?

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month

The best decisions result from surfacing different points of view and searching for creative solutions. We need more conflict.

William Ury

In this chapter, Sally & Jim share how they met later in life. Sally owned a cozy home two blocks from the sea, while Jim grew up in the lush mountains of North Carolina, where he felt most at home. They found a creative way to care for each other and stay in her house by building a large room onto her ocean cottage, designed like a mountain cabin. This is a beautiful example of mutuality and a powerful reminder that people in healthy relationships make decisions and engage their conflicts and differences in a constructive, creative, collaborative manner. Negotiation and mutuality are about deeply listening, allowing room for creative solutions, and caring about each other throughout the process. Regardless of your decision, you have achieved a significant win if you feel loved and heard at the end of the day.

This month, take some time to review your major life decisions. Consider when you practiced mutuality and healthy conflict resolution while discerning what directions to take. Also, consider some times when you did not achieve mutuality and what that was like. There is always so much to learn from our failures.

If you want to practice achieving mutuality with a decision you are currently facing, try employing the following process:

1. Make a date and set aside quiet, uninterrupted time for your discernment process. When you are rested, sober, and calm, you can create a safe container to discuss your decision and be fully present with each other. In the spirit of mutuality, acknowledge that you care deeply that each of you will be satisfied with the decision. Acknowledge that it can take as much time as needed so no one feels pressured. Hurrying is never your friend in relationships or decision-making. Finally, pray together for guidance with this decision if this is part of your spiritual practice.

2. First, clearly define and agree upon the nature of the decision, both what it entails and whom it impacts. Consider if there is a ‘third party’ you want to consult or bring in for help. Is there more information needed before you decide? **Take turns** naming your feelings, dreams, thoughts, background information, history, preferences, leanings, etc., about this decision. Articulate what you want as an outcome and name your deepest needs. Address how attached your ego is to getting its way and why it is so. What is your “skin in this game”?
3. **When listening** to your partner, imagine how they are experiencing this situation. **Don’t interrupt.** If you are confused or want a deeper understanding of your partner’s position, ask honest, open questions that evoke more information when they are finished sharing. If you sense that your partner has more to say, ask, "Is there anything else you want to say about this issue?" When your partner is done speaking, paraphrase what you think you heard them say to ensure they feel heard. Clear up any misperceptions before switching roles. Give this step as much time as it needs.

When listening, if you are feeling reactive or angry to the point where you can’t hear your partner, say so; you can call for a time out to settle down and explore your own feelings. We usually say things we regret when triggered.

4. **Employ the Rule of Six:** Once both partners have had a chance to complete steps two and three, now invoke the spirit of creativity and fresh perspectives. Use the "rule of six" and brainstorm at least six possible solutions for your decision. Each person privately makes a list, writes down their ideas, and then shares them. As you listen to this fresh infusion of inspiration and possibilities, sit with the tension of “not knowing.” You may still not be ready to decide.
5. **Until you have arrived** at a sense of mutuality, you continue to hold space for your decision and perhaps repeat these steps. We know we have reached mutuality when we both can say wholeheartedly, “hell yes!” to a decision.



**Meeting Eight for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Addressing the Themes in Chapter Eight: Anne & Tom Butler**

*Blessed is the couple who extends tender care to one another
when suffering, diminished, wounded, or shamed,
for they shall be comforted.*

Table Hosts: The table hosts welcome the guests. As you settle down, share an overview of the evening with the group, which includes beginning with a prayer, song, or poem and then, while enjoying the meal, telling a story about your relationship based on the "Table Talk" suggestion. Offer a gentle reminder about how this invitation is optional and that no one should share if they do not want to.

Below is the agenda and instructions for leading this gathering, with a timeline that is flexible but gives you an idea of the flow of the evening. The Table Hosts will facilitate the first half of the evening, and then the Circle of Trust leaders will conduct the second half.

5:00-6:30 Dinner

After reading the blessing, poem or playing a song, enjoy your meal and begin to share stories based on the following prompt.



Table Talk Story Suggestion: Share a story of when you knew your relationship had grown past the honeymoon stage.

After the meal and storytelling are concluded, take a quick break and invite the group to reconvene in the living room.

6:30-6:25 Circle of Trust Group Leaders: As you settle down in the living room, as a transition from supper to a book discussion, remind the group that we are now creating a Circle of Trust, based on the practices embodied in the Touchstones to explore the eighth chapter in the book. Be sure everyone has a copy of the Touchstones and something to write on and with. **Then, read the Touchstones.**

6:35-6:45 For a brief check-in, ask if anyone would like to share about practicing the "homework" for going deeper from the last meeting, or how they have been living with the themes we discussed.

Announce that you will show the video clip that goes with this chapter, where you will meet Anne & Tom. To view this clip, bring a laptop computer and go to the *Side by Side* link: www.sidebysideaging.com. When you get to the site, on the menu bar at the top of the page, you will find "Interviews." Click on that, then scroll down to the interview with Tom & Anne. Their interview lasts 6:44 minutes. If you can connect your laptop to a TV, it will be easier to see, but it is not necessary. You can also read their description below, which places where they live, and how they came together as a couple.

Here is Anne & Tom's biography provided to the authors while we were writing their story.

Anne & Tom Butler

Love is our true destiny.

*We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone –
we find it with another.*

Thomas Merton

Tom and Anne discovered their gift of one another and for one another on the occasion of Tom's beloved younger brother Richard's diagnosis of advanced bladder cancer in 1998, and that gift has become a treasure beyond words. Anne was instrumental in coordinating home hospice services for Richard so his wish to die peacefully at home was able to be honored. The unceasing paradoxical dance of love and loss and grief and gratitude remain vibrant threads in the rich tapestry of their

marriage and continue to animate their lives devoted to contemplation and action lived in solitude and community.

Anne gently tends her diverse and rewarding roles of adult nurse practitioner, mentor, coach, writer, speaker, Palliative Medicine thought leader, healthcare consultant, artist of the heart, and midwife for the soul through her emerging end-of-life doula practice. Tom is a born servant leader and contemplative photographer with a deep pastoral soul who has worked extensively in healthcare ministry leadership formation, integrating care of the soul and contemplative practices into the life's blood of faith-based organizations.

Tom and Anne share the fullness of life together—side by side and heart to heart in their beautiful mountain home in Travelers Rest, SC.

6:55-7:05 After watching the interview and/or listening to their description as a couple, invite the group to share anything they wish about what they learned from reading this chapter or viewing the video clip. **Consider noting**, "Tom claims that what makes their relationship strong is how they call forth in each other their 'best selves.' What does that look like for you as a couple? How do you do that for your partner? Anne shares how their times of challenges and heartbreak have made them grow stronger. Does this resonate with you?"

7:05-7:15 Next, invite the group to enter a time of silent reflection in your journals on the following questions, based on this chapter: (Note: you can read these questions aloud; remind the group that they are printed in the Readers' Guide on pp. 260-261, or print them and distribute them.)

- *Blessed is the couple who extends tender care to one another when suffering, diminished, wounded, or shamed, for they shall be comforted . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. Ask, "What does tender care mean to us? In what ways do we express it to each other?"
- Anne quotes Richard Rohr as saying, "Pain that is not transformed is pain that is transmitted." Think of a recent time when you faced a difficult situation alone or together and "transformed it." What did it require to transform the

pain? Or consider when you ignored your suffering; what happened as a result? Is there an issue now that could use transformation and your tender care and attention?

7:15-7:35 After journaling, each couple shares their reflections and discusses these themes. The couples can spread out for more privacy for this conversation.

7:35-7:50 The Circle of Trust Leaders call the group back to the circle for a large group discussion. The leader/s invites anyone who wishes to share to discuss something they want to bring to the large group.

7:50-8:00 Before the closing circle, decide on the date, time, and Table Hosts for your next meeting, as well as who will bring what dish. The next meeting's Table Hosts will send an email reminder to the group with directions to their home. Also, remind the group to read Chapter Nine in *Side by Side*. Read aloud the following practice for next month:

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month:

Practicing the Power of Questions at the End of Your Days

The Butlers sit down together at the end of each day. Using the poem by the great Irish poet and writer John O'Donohue, "At the End of the Day: A Mirror of Questions," they choose one or two questions, journal for a few minutes in response, and then share their reflections with each other. We suggest you try it!

Below are examples of questions similar to the ones in the poem, and/or you may be inspired to craft your own. (To access the poem and the complete list of questions, see page 98 in O'Donohue's book, *To Bless the Space Between Us*, or go online and type in the poem's title; many sites list it.)

- Where did I feel the pain of a wound today? Did anyone notice?
- I wonder why I was given this day.
- If I could live this day over, what would I do differently?
- What brought me alive today?

8:00-8:10 Closing Circle Invite anyone who wishes to briefly state, in a sentence or two, what has touched them during this time, an insight they are taking away from the group, or simply how they are feeling. You may end the session with "The Beatitudes for Couples," a poem or song selected by the group leaders.



Handout for Meeting Eight for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Anne & Tom Butler

Reflection Questions

- *Blessed is the couple who extends tender care to one another when suffering, diminished, wounded, or shamed, for they shall be comforted . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. Ask, “What does tender care mean to us? In what ways do we express it to each other?”

- Anne quotes Richard Rohr as saying, “Pain that is not transformed is pain that is transmitted.” Think of a recent time when you faced a difficult situation alone or together and “transformed it.” What did it require to transform the pain? Or consider when you ignored your suffering; what happened as a result? Is there an issue now that could use transformation and your tender attention?

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month

Practicing the Power of Questions at the End of Your Days

The Butlers sit down together at the end of each day. Using the poem by the great Irish poet and writer John O'Donohue, "At the End of the Day: A Mirror of Questions," they choose one or two questions, journal for a few minutes in response, and then share their reflections with each other. We suggest you try it!

Below are examples of questions similar to the ones in the poem, and/or you may be inspired to craft your own. (To access the poem and the complete list of questions, see page 98 in O'Donohue's book, *To Bless the Space Between Us*, or go online and type in the poem's title; many sites list it.)

- Where did I feel the pain of a wound today? Did anyone notice?
- I wonder why I was given this day.
- If I could live this day over, what would I do differently?
- What brought me alive today?



**Meeting Nine for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Addressing the Themes in Chapter Nine: Patsy Grace & Harvey Bottelsen**

Blessed is the couple who recognizes the Indwelling Spirit in all of life, for they shall encounter the Mystery and see the Light in all beings.

Table Hosts: The table hosts welcome the guests. As you settle down, share an overview of the evening with the group, which includes beginning with a prayer, song, or poem and then, while enjoying the meal, telling a story about your relationship based on the "Table Talk" suggestion. Offer a gentle reminder about how this invitation is optional and that no one should share if they do not want to.

Below is the agenda and instructions for leading this gathering, with a timeline that is flexible but gives you an idea of the flow of the evening. The Table Hosts will facilitate the first half of the evening, and then the Circle of Trust leaders will conduct the second half.

5:00-6:30 Dinner

After reading the blessing, poem or playing a song, enjoy your meal and begin to share stories based on the following prompt.



Table Talk Story Suggestion: Share a story about your unfolding spiritual journeys. Have you ever gone on a pilgrimage to a sacred site? Have you followed a spiritual leader? Did you join a spiritual community? How have you changed and evolved in your spiritual lives and practices, and in what ways do you journey together and separately?

6:30-8:00 After the meal and storytelling are concluded, take a quick break and invite the group to reconvene in the living room.

6:30-6:35 Circle of Trust Group Leaders: As you settle down in the living room, as a transition from supper to a book discussion, remind the group that we are now creating a Circle of Trust, based on the practices embodied in the Touchstones to explore the ninth chapter in the book. Be sure everyone has a copy of the Touchstones as well as something to write on and with. **Then, read the Touchstones.**

6:35-6:45 For a brief check-in, ask if anyone would like to share about practicing the "homework" for going deeper from the last meeting, or how they have been living with the themes we discussed.

6:45-6:55 Announce that you will show the video clip that goes with this chapter, where you will meet Patsy & Harvey. To view this clip, bring a laptop computer and go to the *Side by Side* link: www.sidebysideaging.com. When you get to the site, on the menu bar at the top of the page, you will find "Interviews." Click on that, then scroll down to the interview with Patsy & Harvey. Their interview lasts 6:44 minutes. If you can connect your laptop to a TV, it will be easier to see, but it is not necessary. You can also read their description below, which places where they live, and how they came together as a couple.

Below is their biography provided to the authors while we were writing their story.

Patsy Grace & Harvey Bottelsen

*The minute I heard my first love story
I started looking for you
Not knowing how blind that was.
Lovers don't finally meet somewhere
They are in each other all along.*

Rumi

Patsy Grace & Harvey Bottelsen met in the beautiful and magical land of Bali in 1994. That moment of immediate recognition and soul connection led to a life together filled with family and friends, travel, hiking, meditating, and exploring their ever-growing spirituality. For Harvey, tennis opened the doors to many business and philanthropic endeavors. Patsy's professional focus included several varied arenas from social services to entrepreneurial businesses in manufacturing and import, to fitness and health. They are happily nestled in their home in the foothills of Santa Barbara.

6:55-7:05 After watching the interview and/or listening to their description as a couple, invite the group to share anything they wish about what they learned from reading this chapter or viewing the video clip. **Consider asking**, "Patsy & Harvey disclose how they share an 'enchanted life' and experienced an instantaneous spiritual connection when they met. Can you name some moments of enchantment you have shared? What would leading an enchanted life look like to you as a couple? Could your relationship and lives use more enchantment?"

7:05-7:15 Next, invite the group to enter a time of silent reflection in your journals on the following questions, based on this chapter: (Note: you can read these questions aloud; remind the group that they are printed in the Readers' Guide on pp. 262-263, or print them and distribute them.)

- *Blessed is the couple who recognizes the Indwelling Spirit in all of life, for they shall encounter the Mystery and see the Light in all beings . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. How does this beatitude speak to you? Think of an experience when this beatitude came alive for you and your relationship.
- Is there a spiritual teacher or tradition at the center of your relationship around which much of your lives organize? What are the central teachings of this teacher? Is there a word like Patsy & Harvey's "enchantment" that captures the nature of your spirituality and how you live?

7:15-7:35 After journaling, each couple shares their reflections and discusses these themes. The couples can spread out for more privacy for this conversation.

7:35-7:50 The Circle of Trust Leaders call the group back to the circle for a large group discussion. The leader/s invites anyone who wishes to discuss something they want to bring to the large group.

7:50-8:00 Before the closing circle, decide on the date, time, and Table Hosts for your next meeting, and who will bring what dish. The next meeting's Table Hosts will send an email reminder to the group with directions to their home. Also, remind the group to read Chapter Ten in *Side by Side*. Read aloud the following practice for next month:

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month:

Patsy & Harvey have meditated together for many years. Together, consider practicing a regular time each day, for at least twenty minutes, for Centering Prayer or other forms of observing silence through meditation or prayer. Create a quiet, protected, safe space and simple, meaningful rituals. Reflect on how this is working and whether you can discern any ways praying together influences the "atmosphere" of your relationship.

Another option: Decide to dedicate one day a week or month to observing silence in your home, where you don't talk with each other or anyone else. Unplug from the media, telephones, and other distractions. Come out of the silence at dinner and share what it was like to be relieved from the pressure to interact with others and create space to go within.

8:00-8:10 Closing Circle. Invite anyone who wishes to briefly state, in a sentence or two, what has touched them during this time, an insight they are taking away from the group, or simply how they are feeling. You may end the session with "The Beatitudes for Couples" or a poem or song selected by the group leaders.



Handout for Meeting Nine for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club

Patsy Grace & Harvey Bottelsen

Reflection Questions:

- *Blessed is the couple who recognizes the Indwelling Spirit in all of life, for they shall encounter the Mystery and see the Light in all beings . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. How does this beatitude speak to you? Think of an experience when this beatitude came alive for you and in your relationship.

- Is there a spiritual teacher or tradition at the center of your relationship around which much of your lives organize? What are the central teachings of this teacher? Is there a word like Patsy and Harvey's word, "enchantment," that captures the nature of your spirituality and how you live?

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month:

Patsy and Harvey have meditated together for many years. Together, consider practicing a regular time each day, for at least twenty minutes, for Centering Prayer or other forms of observing silence through meditation or prayer. Create a quiet, protected, safe space and simple, meaningful rituals. Reflect on how this is working and whether you can discern any ways praying together influences the "atmosphere" of your relationship.

Another option: Decide to dedicate one day a week or month to observing silence in your home, where you don't talk with each other or anyone else. Unplug from the media, telephones, and other distractions. Come out of the silence at dinner and share what it was like to be relieved from the pressure to interact with others and create space to go within.



**Meeting Ten for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Addressing the Themes in Chapter Ten: Marcy & Rick Jackson**

Blessed is the couple who dances with the tension between "me" and "we," for they will know companionship without loss of self.

Table Hosts: The table hosts welcome the guests. As you settle down, share an overview of the evening with the group, which includes beginning with a prayer, song, or poem and then, while enjoying the meal, telling a story about your relationship based on the "Table Talk" suggestion. Offer a gentle reminder about how this invitation is optional and that no one should share if they do not want to.

Below is the agenda and instructions for leading this gathering. The timeline is flexible but gives you an idea of the flow of the evening. The Table Hosts will facilitate the first half of the evening, and then the Circle of Trust leaders will conduct the second half.

5:00-6:30 Dinner

After reading the blessing, poem, or playing a song, enjoy your meal and begin to share stories based on the following prompt.



Table Talk Story Suggestion: Share a story about how the two of you play, celebrate, and otherwise practice a little tomfoolery together. What is your idea of a "good time" as a couple?

6:30-8:00 After the meal and storytelling are concluded, take a quick break and invite the group to reconvene in the living room.

6:30-6:35 Circle of Trust Group Leaders: As you settle down in the living room, as a transition from supper to a book discussion, remind the group that we are now creating a Circle of Trust based on the practices embodied in the Touchstones to explore the tenth chapter in the book. Be sure everyone has a copy of the Touchstones and something to write on and write with. **Then, read the Touchstones.**

6:35-6:45 For a brief check-in, ask if anyone would like to share about practicing the "homework" for going deeper from the last meeting, or how they have been living with the themes we discussed.

6:45-6:55 Announce that you will show the video clip that goes with this chapter, where you will meet Rick & Marcy. To view this clip, bring a laptop computer and go to the *Side by Side* link: www.sidebysideaging.com. When you get to the site, on the menu bar at the top of the page, you will find "Interviews." Click on that, then scroll down to the interview with Rick and Marcy Jackson. Their interview lasts 6:00 minutes. If you can connect your laptop to a TV, it will be easier to see, but it is not necessary. You can also read their description below, which places where they live, and how they came together as a couple.

Below is their biography provided to the authors while we were writing their story.

Marcy & Rick Jackson

And the world cannot be discovered by a journey of miles, no matter how long, but only by a spiritual journey, a journey of one inch, very arduous and humbling and joyful, by which we arrive at the ground at our feet, and learn to be at home.

Wendell Berry

Marcy and Rick Jackson met at college in Minnesota, got married in their early 20s, and "grew up" together—navigating individuation from families of origin while also discovering what it means to be marriage partners. Since then, they have partnered in parenting two wonderful daughters, co-founding The Center for Courage & Renewal (with friend and mentor Parker Palmer), serving on non-profit boards, traveling across the world, and now singing for people at the thresholds of life as

part of a Threshold Choir. Marcy has been an individual and family therapist, grief counselor, retreat facilitator, non-profit leader, mentor, spiritual seeker, and sometime artist. Rick's roles have included campus ministry, YMCA executive, consultant in youth and community leadership development, adjunct professor, coach, and mentor. They live on Bainbridge Island, WA—a 30-minute ferry ride to Seattle—in a sustainably built, solar-powered community in Winslow, walkable to favorite shops, trails, and haunts.

6:55-7:05 After watching the interview and/or listening to their description as a couple, invite the group to share anything they wish about what they learned from reading this chapter or viewing the video clip. **Consider asking**, "In terms of introversion and extroversion, where do you each fall? How does this impact your relationship? Do you process things differently? How would you name those differences?"

7:05-7:15 Next, invite the group to enter a time of silent reflection in your journals on the following questions, based on this chapter: (Note: you can read these questions aloud; remind the group that they are printed in the Readers' Guide on pp. 263-264, or print them and distribute them.)

- *Blessed is the couple who dances with the tension between "me" and "we," for they will know companionship without loss of self . . . is the beatitude for this couple. Regarding the tension between "me and we," what comes to mind when reflecting on your relationship? Considering your history, were there times when you felt you lost yourself in your relationship? Or did you become too independent and disconnected? What happened? How did you regain your footing or balance?*
- Regarding the theme of "soul and role," what commitments, interests, and creative endeavors are calling you now? What is naturally ending, and what is bringing you alive that is fresh and new?

7:15-7:35 After journaling, each couple shares their reflections and discusses these themes. The couples can spread out for more privacy for this conversation.

7:35-7:50 The Circle of Trust Leaders call the group back to the circle for a large group discussion. The leader/s invites anyone who wishes to discuss something they want to bring to the large group.

7:50-8:00 Before the closing circle, decide on the date, time, and Table Hosts for your next meeting and who will bring what dish. The next meeting's Table Hosts will send out an email reminder to the group with instructions to their home. Remind the group to read Chapter Eleven in *Side by Side*. Finally, read aloud the following practice for next month:

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month:

If you have adult children, write them a letter about what you have learned about being in a healthy, life-giving relationship/partnership with each other, which you would like to pass along to them. What have you learned about love, conflict, gender role issues, and shadow work? What mistakes have you made in your relationship, and what did you learn from them? What wisdom would have helped you when you were at their age and stage of life? What do you want them to know about you that you haven't had a chance to discuss? Just begin, and see what emerges, and then compare your letters. If you wish, send them to your children or other significant young people in your life. Invite them to discuss your letters when you get together next.

8:00-8:10 Closing Circle Invite anyone who wishes to briefly state, in a sentence or two, what has touched them during this time, an insight they are taking away from the group, or simply how they are feeling. You may end the session with "The Beatitudes for Couples," a poem or song selected by the group leaders.



Handout for Meeting Ten for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Marcy & Rick Jackson

Reflection Questions:

- *Blessed is the couple who dances with the tension between "me" and "we," for they will know companionship without loss of self . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. Regarding the tension between "me and we," what comes to mind when reflecting on your relationship? Considering your history, were there times when you felt you lost yourself in your relationship? Or did you become too independent and disconnected? What happened? How did you regain your footing or balance?

- Regarding the theme of "soul and role" what commitments, interests, and creative endeavors are calling you now? What is naturally ending, and what is bringing you alive that is fresh and new?

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month:

If you have adult children, write them a letter about what you have learned about being in a healthy, life-giving relationship/partnership with each other, which you would like to pass along to them. What have you learned about love, conflict, gender role issues, and shadow work? What mistakes have you made in your relationship, and what did you learn from them? What wisdom would have helped you when you were at their age and stage of life? What do you want them to know about you that you haven't had a chance to discuss? Just begin, and see what emerges, and then compare your letters. If you wish, send them to your children or other significant young people in your life. Invite them to discuss your letters when you get together next.



**Meeting Eleven for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Addressing the Themes in Chapter Eleven:
Karen Noordhoff & David Hagstrom**

*Blessed is the couple who practices Sabbath through the daily bread of devotion,
mindfulness, and prayer, for they shall find Home.*

Table Hosts: The table hosts welcome the guests. As you settle down, share an overview of the evening with the group, beginning with a prayer, song, or poem and then, while enjoying the meal, telling a story about your relationship based on the "Table Talk" suggestion. Offer a gentle reminder about how this invitation is optional and that no one should share if they do not want to.

Below is the agenda and instructions for leading this gathering. The timeline is flexible but gives you an idea of the flow of the evening. The Table Hosts will facilitate the first half of the evening, and then the Circle of Trust leaders will conduct the second half.

5:00-6:30 Dinner

After reading the blessing, poem, or playing a song, enjoy your meal and begin to share stories based on the following prompt.



Table Talk Story Suggestion: Share a story about how, as a couple, you successfully drew on your courage to face one another while in conflict and eventually worked your way through it together. Like Karen & David, did you have different stories about the situation? What did you learn in the process?

After the meal and storytelling are concluded, take a quick break and invite the group to reconvene in the living room.

6:30-6:35 Circle of Trust Group Leaders: As you settle down in the living room, as a transition from supper to a book discussion, remind the group that we are now creating a Circle of Trust, based on the practices embodied in the Touchstones to explore the tenth chapter in the book. Be sure everyone has a copy of the Touchstones as well as something to write on and with. **Then, read the Touchstones.**

6:35-6:45 For a brief check-in, ask if anyone would like to share about practicing the "homework" for going deeper from the last meeting, or how they have been living with the themes we discussed.

6:45-6:55 Announce that you will show the video clip that goes with this chapter, where you will meet Karen & David. To view this clip, bring a laptop computer and go to the *Side by Side* link: www.sidebysideaging.com. When you get to the site, on the menu bar at the top of the page, you will find "Interviews." Click on that, then scroll down to the interview with Karen & David. Their interview lasts 6:10 minutes. If you can connect your laptop to a TV, it will be easier to see, but it is not necessary. You can also read their description below, which places where they live, and how they came together as a couple.

Below is their biography provided to the authors while we were writing their story.

Karen Noordhoff & David Hagstrom

A good marriage is one in which each partner appoints the other to be the guardian of his solitude, and thus they show each other the greatest possible trust. . . . [And] once the realization is accepted that even between the closest people infinite distances exist, a marvelous living side-by-side can grow up for them, . . . which gives them the possibility of always seeing each other as a whole and before an immense sky.

Rainer Maria Rilke
Letters to a Young Poet

Our hearts and souls truly "met" while working together at a college in the Midwest. That initial bonding and the gift of 40 years of togetherness have been a sacred grace, a time and space of saying "yes" to everything, all the while being held together by great trust in each other and respect for each other's know-how and wisdom; deep and caring listening, especially during daily "wine time" conversations; encouragement to live with authenticity and integrity; travel adventures; and dancing in the kitchen. Our partnership motto is "We work things out."

Throughout his life as a school leader, college professor, and writer, David has tried to encourage students, teachers, and other leaders to know themselves more deeply and to lead with a servant's heart. Karen's gifts of attentiveness, active witnessing, and reflection have found expression in the creation of hospitable and challenging spaces for learning and growth in her work as a K-6 educator, university professor, and facilitator of Courage & Renewal Circles of Trust®.

We live in Portland, Oregon, located in the lush Willamette Valley, and also part-time in central Oregon at our cabin we call "The Clearing," where the mountains, forests, and high desert come together in the small town of Sisters. Every several years we take a 3-month sabbatical to live in France.

6:55-7:05 After watching the interview and/or listening to their description as a couple, invite the group to share anything they wish about what they learned from reading this chapter or viewing the video clip. **Consider asking**, "David shared how he used to disappear when there was a conflict, but with age, he has learned with difficulties to 'stay in them.' Karen notes that they 'pull down the shades' to protect their space when reconnecting after a rough patch and cozy up to diminish the distance. How about you in your relationship? What have you learned about handling conflict?"

7:05-7:15 Next, invite the group to enter a time of silent reflection in your journals on the following questions, based on this chapter: (Note: you can read these questions aloud; remind the group that they are printed in the Readers' Guide on pp. 264-265, or print them and distribute them.)

- *Blessed is the couple who practices Sabbath through the daily bread of devotion, mindfulness, and prayer, for they shall find Home . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. David & Karen described how they "observe the Sabbath" each evening to rest, enjoy a glass of wine, share spiritual readings, and pray. They have also learned to protect their relationship by "pulling down the shades" and staying together through the rough patches of conflict, and, at times, use this Sabbath space for just that. How do you pull down the shades and protect your relationship from outside influences long enough so you can turn towards each other for whatever joys and challenges you are going through?
- Are there experiences you have undergone as a couple about which you tell fundamentally different stories, like Karen and David's different stories about leaving Alaska? They may be based on different memories or interpretations and meanings of what occurred. Rather than trying to convince David of the "truth" of her story, Karen says, "We tell different stories about this." What is it like to acknowledge that your partner experienced the same event differently than you and just let that be? Is there an example of something you tell different stories about in your relationship?

7:15-7:35 After journaling, each couple shares their reflections and discusses these themes. The couples can spread out for more privacy for this conversation.

7:35-7:50 The Circle of Trust Leaders call the group back to the circle for a large group discussion. The leader/s invites anyone who wishes to share to discuss something they want to bring to the large group.

7:50-8:00 Before the closing circle, decide on the date, time, and table Host for your next meeting and who will bring what dish. The next meeting's Table Hosts will send out an email reminder with instructions to their home. Also, remind the group to read Chapter Twelve in *Side by Side*. Read aloud the following practice for next month:

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month:

David & Karen shared many travel adventures, but with aging, they redefine adventure. "The adventure now is about growing older together." Take some Sabbath time to journal about this theme, and then share how or if you are experiencing aging as an adventure you are undergoing together. Explore what this means to you. Ask: What road or roads is aging leading us to and down? What do we need for the journey? How might we improve or enhance this adventure? What destinations am I longing for now? How can we help each other? What do we need to pack for the trip, and what do we need to leave behind?

Jean Vanier names a "new freedom from function" with aging. With this new freedom, Karen and David focus on their creativity and writing lives. How about you? As part of your adventure with aging, what creative, intellectual, or spiritual territory do you long to explore?

8:00-8:10 Closing Circle Invite anyone who wishes to briefly state, in a sentence or two, what has touched them during this time, an insight they are taking away from the group, or simply how they are feeling. You may end the session with "The Beatitudes for Couples," a poem or song selected by the group leaders.



Handout for Meeting Eleven for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club

Karen Noordhoff & David Hagstrom

Reflection Questions:

- *Blessed is the couple who practices Sabbath through the daily bread of devotion, mindfulness, and prayer, for they shall find Home . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. David & Karen described how they "observe the Sabbath" each evening to rest, enjoy a glass of wine, share spiritual readings, and pray. They have also learned to protect their relationship by "pulling down the shades" and staying together through the rough patches of conflict, and, at times, use this Sabbath space for just that. How do you pull down the shades and protect your relationship from outside influences long enough so you can turn towards each other for whatever joys and challenges you are going through?

- Are there experiences you have undergone as a couple about which you tell fundamentally different stories, like Karen and David's different stories about leaving Alaska? They may be based on different memories or interpretations and meanings of what occurred. Rather than trying to convince David of the "truth" of her story, Karen says, "We tell different stories about this." What is it like to acknowledge that your partner experienced the same event differently than you and just let that be? Is there an example of something you tell different stories about in your relationship?

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month:

David & Karen shared many travel adventures, but with aging, they redefine adventure. "The adventure now is about growing older together." Take some Sabbath time to journal about this theme, and then share how or if you are experiencing aging as an adventure you are undergoing together. Explore what this means to you. Ask: What road or roads is aging leading us to and down? What do we need for the journey? How might we improve or enhance this adventure? What destinations am I longing for now? How can we help each other? What do we need to pack for the trip, and what do we need to leave behind?

Jean Vanier names a "new freedom from function" with aging. With this new freedom, Karen and David focus on their creativity and writing lives. How about you? As part of your adventure with aging, what creative, intellectual, or spiritual territory do you long to explore?



**Meeting Twelve for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Addressing the Themes in Chapter Twelve: Michael & Eileen Heaton**

*Blessed is the couple who extends mercy and forgiveness,
for they shall be relieved of resentment and harsh judgment.*

Table Hosts: The table hosts welcome the guests. As you settle down, share an overview of the evening with the group, beginning with a prayer, song, or poem and then, while enjoying the meal, telling a story about your relationship based on the "Table Talk" suggestion. Offer a gentle reminder about how this invitation is optional and that no one should share if they do not want to.

Below is the agenda and instructions for leading this gathering. The timeline is flexible but gives you an idea of the flow of the evening. The Table Hosts will facilitate the first half of the evening, and then the Circle of Trust leaders will conduct the second half.

5:00-6:30 Dinner

After the reading of the blessing, poem, or playing a song, enjoy your meal and begin to share stories based on the following prompt.



Table Talk Story Suggestion: Share a story of when you took on a project to create something new together and what you were able to manifest (i.e., building a home, planting a garden, creating a company, raising children, launching a podcast, volunteering, writing a book, etc.)

After the meal and storytelling are concluded, take a quick break and invite the group to reconvene in the living room.

6:30-6:35 Circle of Trust Group Leaders: As you settle down in the living room, as a transition from supper to a book discussion, remind the group that we are now creating a Circle of Trust, based on the practices embodied in the Touchstones to explore the tenth chapter in the book. Be sure everyone has a copy of the Touchstones and something to write on and with. **Then, read the Touchstones.**

6:35-6:45 For a brief check-in, ask if anyone would like to share about practicing the "homework" for going deeper from the last meeting, or how they have been living with the themes we discussed.

6:45-6:55 Announce that you will show the video clip that goes with this chapter, where you will meet Eileen & Michael. To view this clip, bring a laptop computer and go to the *Side by Side* link: www.sidebysideaging.com. When you get to the site, on the menu bar at the top of the page, you will find "Interviews." Click on that, then scroll down to the interview with Michael & Eileen. Their interview lasts 6:20 minutes. If you can connect your laptop to a TV, it will be easier to see, but it is not necessary. You can also read their description below, which places where they live, and how they came together as a couple.

Here is their biography provided to the authors while we were writing their story.

Michael & Eileen Heaton

*If love is the answer, then community is the context
and tenderness is the methodology.*

Fr. Greg Boyle

Homeboy Industries

Eileen and Michael met at a New York City theater audition in 1978 and were married on stage in Myrtle Beach, SC, in August 1979. Their lives have been entwined in business, domestic life, spiritual curiosity, and development for 40+ years.

Both Michael and Eileen have degrees in the performing arts and have followed the thread of creativity, hard work, novelty, and an entrepreneurial spirit in live theater, restaurants/hospitality, teaching, training, coaching, and mentoring.

They currently live on the Deschutes River in downtown Bend, Oregon and have lived in Central Oregon for more than 25 years.

6:55-7:05 After watching the interview and/or listening to the description of them as a couple, invite the group to share anything they wish about what they learned from reading this chapter or viewing the video clip. **Consider asking**, "This couple names the reality that we don't mean to hurt each other, but we do. Eileen discusses the nature of mercy, a softening process where you choose to be in this tension together, in the spirit of camaraderie and compassion. To her, forgiveness implies that you are somehow above the other person. What are your thoughts or their insights about the difference between forgiveness versus mercy?"

7:05-7:15 Next, invite the group to enter a time of silent reflection in your journals on the following questions, based on this chapter: (Note: you can read these questions aloud; remind the group that they are printed in the Readers' Guide on pp. 265-266, or print them and distribute them.)

- *Blessed is the couple who extends mercy and forgiveness, for they shall be relieved of resentment and harsh judgment . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. When have you been called to extend mercy or forgiveness to one another in small and large ways? What about now?
- Michael & Eileen deeply admire and respect each other. Take some time to write down what you admire and cherish about your partner. Ask: Do we often tell each other how much we appreciate each other? Share your lists when you are ready.

7:15-7:35 After journaling, each couple shares their reflections and discusses these themes. The couples can spread out for more privacy for this conversation.

7:35-7:50 The Circle of Trust Leaders call the group back to the circle for a large group discussion. The leader/s invites anyone who wishes to share to discuss something they want to bring to the large group.

7:50-8:00 Before the closing circle, decide on the date, time, and Table Hosts for your next meeting, and who will bring what dish. The next meeting's Table Hosts will send an email reminder to the group with directions to their home. Remind the group to read Chapter Thirteen in *Side by Side*. Finally, read aloud the following practice for next month:

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month:

The Hindu Stages of Life- Review

From his men's work, Michael describes the stages of life from the Hindu perspective:

- **The Student Stage:** defined as preparing for success later in life, learning, studying, and obedience to a teacher or other mentors.
- **The Householder Stage:** includes marriage, work, and sustaining one's family.
- **The Forest Dweller Stage:** occurs when the family and work duties have been fulfilled, and we withdraw from the fray.
- **The Renunciation Stage:** when, having fulfilled all prior obligations, one is free to devote one's life entirely to spiritual growth. Age creates a built-in monastery at the threshold of our departure from this world.

In the Heaton's' chapter, we also address stages in committed relationships:

- **In the first stage** of a relationship, a couple can feel like they are sharing paradise on a tropical island; they often experience a deep soul connection and sexual passion for one another but don't really know each other yet.
- **The second stage** is more like a desert landscape, negotiating dry, demanding, trying territory where you question your commitment. Now that you know each other, and your shadows are appearing, a period of doubting can set in.

You ask, "Do I want to spend a lifetime with this person? Do I like this person?" This stage can last a long time and be considerably painful and lonely, filled with a sense of loss and failure.

- **The third stage emerges from** the difficult work of stage two. You face challenges together and find resilience and strength. You mature in self-awareness and relationship skills. You recommit to being together when you now actually know each other. Perhaps your relationship has cycled through these stages several or many times.

This month, examine your relationship's cycles, share your thoughts and memories of walking together through these stages, and consider where you find yourselves now.

8:00-8:10 Closing Circle Invite anyone who wishes to briefly state, in a sentence or two, what has touched them during this time, an insight they are taking away from the group, or simply how they are feeling. You may end the session with "The Beatitudes for Couples," a poem or song selected by the group leaders.

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month:

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- **The third stage emerges from** the difficult work of stage two. You face challenges together and find resilience and strength. You mature in self-awareness and relationship skills. You recommit to being together when you now actually know each other. Perhaps your relationship has cycled through these stages several or many times.

This month, examine your relationship's cycles, share your thoughts and memories of walking together through these stages, and consider where you find yourselves now.



**Meeting Thirteen for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club
Addressing the Themes in Chapter Thirteen:
Ruth Shagoury & Jim Whitney**

Blessed is the couple who offers a beneficial presence across the generations, for they shall leave a legacy of love.

Table Hosts: The Table Hosts welcome the guests. As you settle down, share an overview of the evening with the group, which includes beginning with a prayer, song, or poem and then, while enjoying the meal, telling a story about your relationship based on the "Table Talk" suggestion. Offer a gentle reminder about how this invitation is optional and that no one should share if they do not want to.

Acknowledge that this is your final meeting exploring *Side by Side*, and mention that you will have a chance at the end of this meeting to discuss ways you wish to disband or continue to meet, read another book, create a film group, etc. Also, the closing circle will last about twenty minutes longer.

Below is the agenda and instructions for leading this gathering. The timeline is flexible but gives you an idea of the flow of the evening. The Table Hosts will facilitate the first half of the evening, and then the Circle of Trust leaders will conduct the second half.

5:00-6:30 Dinner

After reading the blessing, poem, or playing a song, enjoy your meal and begin to share stories based on the following prompt.



Table Talk Story Suggestion: Share a story of when your partner extended a radical act of kindness to you.

After the meal and storytelling are concluded, take a quick break and invite the group to reconvene in the living room.

6:30-6:35 Circle of Trust Group Leaders: As you settle down in the living room, as a transition from supper to a book discussion, remind the group that we are now creating a Circle of Trust based on the practices embodied in the Touchstones to explore the final chapter in the book. Be sure everyone has a copy of the Touchstones as well as something to write on and write with. **Then, read the Touchstones.**

6:35-6:45 For a brief check-in, ask if anyone would like to share about practicing the "homework" for going deeper from the last meeting, or how they have been living with the themes we discussed.

6:45-6:55 Announce that you will show the video clip that goes with this chapter, where you will meet Ruth & Jim. To view this clip, bring a laptop computer and go to the *Side by Side* link: www.sidebysideaging.com. When you get to the site, on the menu bar at the top of the page, you will find "Interviews." Click on that, then scroll down to the interview with Ruth & Jim. Their interview lasts 7:13 minutes. If you can connect your laptop to a TV, it will be easier to see, but it is not necessary. You can also read their description below, which places where they live, and how they came together as a couple.

Below is their biography provided to the authors while we were writing their story.

Jim Whitney & Ruth Shagoury

Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.

Dalai Lama

Jim Whitney and Ruth Shagoury met at the University of New Hampshire, and as they worked together, they realized the perfect fit of their friendship, senses of humor, love of music, and love for each other.

Jim is an engineer, photographer, videographer, and all-around problem-solver. Ruth has been a teacher, writer, and researcher for most of her adult life, with special interests in how children and second language learners make sense of the world through speaking, writing, and art.

Transplants from New England, they now make their home in Portland, Oregon.

6:55-7:05 After watching the interview and/or listening to the description of them as a couple, invite the group to share anything they wish about what they learned from reading this chapter or viewing the video clip. **Consider asking**, "When Ruth & Jim share about their parents' decline, they claim, 'The generations are important to each other.' What does this bring up for you? How do you experience this interdependency and influence across the generations in your family? What messages and lessons do you want to teach your children about your own aging and eventual death?"

7:05-7:15 Next, invite the group to enter a time of silent reflection in your journals on the following questions, based on this chapter: (Note: you can read these questions aloud; remind the group that they are printed in the Readers' Guide on pp. 266-268, or print them and distribute them.)

- *Blessed is the couple who offers a beneficial presence across the generations, for they shall leave a legacy of love . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. The German phrase "Jugend und ältesten, Austausch zwischen" refers to the intense, beneficial exchange between youth and elders, an expression that recognizes the energy transference from one generation to the other. Ruth

invites the neighborhood children in to take one of her books home. Do you enjoy such relationships? What adults did you know throughout childhood who offered you this beneficial generational exchange? Who might you build relationships with at this time?

- Jim & Ruth quote the Dalai Lama, *Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible*, and emphasize the importance of extending “radical acts of kindness” to each other. How might you deepen your capacity to extend unconditional kindness to yourself and each other in the days ahead?

7:15-7:35 After journaling, each couple shares their reflections and discusses these themes. The couples can spread out for more privacy for this conversation.

7:35-7:50 The Circle of Trust Leaders call the group back to the circle for a large group discussion. The leader/s invites anyone who wishes to discuss something they want to bring to the large group.

7:50-8:00 Since this is the last meeting to study *Side by Side*, take this time to discuss whether the group wants to disband or continue meeting. There should be no pressure to continue. However, if you still want to convene, you can choose another book to read together, create a "relationship film" group, continue gathering for supper & stories, and/or share some open time to share your lives. The possibilities are limitless.

Before the closing circle, read aloud the practice for going deeper.

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month:

Jim and Ruth discuss how, as a result of helping their parents at the end of their lives, they have committed to getting rid of what they have gathered over the years so that it won't fall on their children to do so. Take some time to discuss what you wish to shed from your lives now. Perhaps you have boxes of old journals that need to be read and recycled, bookshelves of novels you will never read again, faded artwork that “only a mother could love,” or clothing that has seen its day. Go through your home, a room at a time, and see what is ready to be released from your life. Bless it, and let it go. This is an excellent time to ask your children what they would like to

inherit when you pass—making a list of "who gets what" can prevent tensions and anger between siblings at the time of your death.

This process can serve as a powerful life review. As you handle each object, remember where it came from, savor the stories it brings up for you, and take a picture of it for a visual keepsake. And if you no longer use or find joy in it, someone else will. Pass it forward and donate it with your blessing and gratitude.

8:00-8:10 Closing Circle

Since this is the final official meeting for exploring *Side by Side*, offer the group ten minutes for journaling to reflect on what has been the most meaningful, enjoyable, and challenging moments of your Soup & Story Club. Which couples in the book would you most like to have dinner with? What have you learned from each other? What do you wish to remember?

Then, invite anyone who wishes to share briefly. You may end the session with "The Beatitudes for Couples," a poem or song selected by the group leaders. Thank the group for their faithful participation in this Soup & Story Club.



Handout for Meeting Thirteen for the *Side by Side* Soup & Story Club

Ruth Shagoury & Jim Whitney

Reflection Questions:

- *Blessed is the couple who offers a beneficial presence across the generations, for they shall leave a legacy of love . . .* is the beatitude for this couple. The German phrase "Jugend und ältesten, Austausch zwischen" refers to the intense, beneficial exchange between youth and elders, an expression that recognizes the energy transference from one generation to the other. Ruth invites the neighborhood children in to take one of her books home. Do you enjoy such relationships? What adults did you know throughout childhood who offered you this beneficial generational exchange? Who might you build relationships with at this time?
- Jim & Ruth quote the Dalai Lama, *Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.* They emphasize the importance of extending “radical acts of kindness” to each other. How might you deepen your capacity to extend unconditional kindness to yourself and each other in the days ahead?

A Practice for Going Deeper in the Coming Month:

Jim and Ruth discuss how, as a result of helping their parents at the end of their lives, they have committed to getting rid of what they have gathered over the years so that it won't fall on their children to do so. Take some time to discuss what you wish to shed from your lives now. Perhaps you have boxes of old journals that need to be read and recycled, bookshelves of novels you will never read again, faded artwork that “only a mother could love,” or clothing that has seen its day. Go through your home, a room at a time, and see what is ready to be released from your life. Bless it, and let it go. This is an excellent time to ask your children what they would like to inherit when you pass—making a list of “who gets what” can prevent tensions and anger between siblings at the time of your death.

This process can serve as a powerful life review. As you handle each object, remember where it came from, savor the stories it brings up for you, and take a picture of it for a visual keepsake. And if you no longer use or find joy in it, someone else will. Pass it forward and donate it with your blessing and gratitude.

Befriending the Shadow*

*Wholeness is the goal, but wholeness does not mean perfection.
It means embracing brokenness as an integral part of life.
The sooner we understand this, the better. It's a truth that can set us free
to live well, to love well, and, in the end, to die well.*

Parker Palmer

Richard Rohr describes the shadow as anything we can't or won't see about ourselves; it refers to the inner qualities we feel so deeply ashamed of that we attempt to hide them. A shadow quality often doesn't fit into our self-image or the idea of who we should be. For example, "I am a kind, loving person, but I have a vicious streak that emerges under pressure." Humans have an amazing capacity for self-deception, so our shadows often lie hidden from our awareness, even though people close to us (especially our partners) can usually see them. When our shadows are exposed, we can feel embarrassed, defensive, humbled, and naked. No wonder we tend to avoid them.

Because shadow qualities tend to be unconscious, they have power over us. Our shadows are not "evil"; yet they allow us to do harm and not know it. Below are several reliable clues (adapted from the writings of James Hollis, Parker Palmer, and Richard Rohr) for when we are acting out of our shadows or hidden selves:

1. Parker Palmer often quips, "If you spot it, you got it." A steadfast way to notice when one's shadow is making an appearance is by catching yourself in the act of projecting it onto others; we criticize someone for qualities we don't want to look at in ourselves. For instance, you may desire to be the center of attention in your family but are unaware of this yearning. Instead, you get angry when your sister steals the spotlight you secretly want.
2. Any time you overreact to something in a manner disproportionate to the circumstance, you are encountering your shadow. For instance, your partner forgets to pick up the mail, and you rant about how she is neglecting you when, in reality, you are neglecting your responsibilities at home. The reaction doesn't fit the event. Watch for any self-righteous overreactions or over-

denials in yourself. These are signs the shadow is wanting to come to light.

3. If you are too anti-anything, the shadow is making an appearance. A familiar example is when we feel righteous indignation about something in the news and launch into a tirade. This gives us a clue that something strong inside of us (i.e., a feeling of powerlessness) is unconscious and has now found an outlet valve. For instance, you might rave about how the city isn't addressing the homeless issue when you avert your eyes from an unhoused person you pass on the street. The shadow self invariably presents as something like justice or "I am doing this for your good" when it is motivated by feelings like fear or anger, a need to control or manipulate, or even express vengeance.

If we are lucky, we receive feedback from trustworthy people who mirror our shadows to us. As couples, when we notice our partners projecting a shadow, we can ask permission to mirror what we are witnessing and invite them to consider what is behind it. And realize that sometimes, they are not ready to hear it.

Richard Rohr notes that the closer you get to the Light, the more your shadows emerge. Paradoxically, great peace and growth can occur when you stop denying your shadow qualities and turn to learning from them, gaining invaluable self-understanding while becoming less defended and defensive.



Dedication

We gratefully dedicate this *Side by Side Instruction Manual* to our Soup & Story Club, formed through Trinity Episcopal Church of Santa Barbara, California. We thank each of you for trusting us, living into this idea and dream with us, and bringing it alive with your wholehearted, vulnerable participation, humor, and faithfulness (not to mention the creative culinary contributions). From your willingness to share your stories and lives, we know we are not alone as we walk “Side by Side” at this time in our lives. We now carry your stories in our hearts and hope many other groups may enjoy the satisfaction of being in a group with loving, funny, honest people like you. Thank you so much.

Pat & Paul Delaney

John & Dawn Draper

Carla & John Spence