

## NAME

Belonging Sunday MP3.mp3

## DATE

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## DURATION

24m 5s

## 2 SPEAKERS

Speaker1

Speaker2

## START OF TRANSCRIPT

**[00:00:00] Speaker1**

The following is a message from Wellspring's congregation. Good morning, everyone. This is our first ever belonging Sunday, a Sunday that we plan to hold every single year, the week after Easter, to celebrate membership and the meaning of belonging as we practice it here in our community. And also how our community, spiritual communities in general, give us these opportunities to practice belonging. And that might sound like a strange phrase to you, right? What does that mean to practice belonging? Well, for some of us, it might be a practice that starts on the inside, right? It might be an inside job at first, or at least in part. Some of us know that feeling of standing maybe in the door of a noisy cafeteria with a full tray and looking around the room at tables full of people who seem to know each other, who are laughing and enjoying themselves and wondering where to sit. Wondering if we can belong there. That cafeteria feeling is one that we might be able to remember from long ago for some of us, but we might have remembered that feeling more recently if we have ever walked into a new job, a new school, if we've ever been at our first day at a church, maybe visiting, if we've ever walked into a professional conference or a networking event, that feeling like we truly belong here, like we can trust that does not always come easily to us. And we know how much courage it takes sometimes to actually take a deep breath in that doorway and say it's OK.

**[00:02:04] Speaker1**

I know that I belong here. Just as much as anyone else. We have an opportunity to practice belonging when we decide that that is true and when we decide we can show up and take that risk to be real, to be honest, to give the actual answer, when somebody says, how are you doing? That is part of belonging, trusting inside of ourselves that we deserve to belong in this world no matter what anyone else might say. But the other side of practicing belonging, that's the part that we get to do here together, it's making that welcoming space for each other. That means a lot of things, right? That means allowing people to be as they are allowing people to be different. It means respecting each other and being accountable to each other, accountable to take good care of our community and the people within it. That's part of creating a community where people can belong. That's what Oma was doing in that story that as Carol read earlier this morning, and importantly, it wasn't just what Obama was doing with her stew. It was also what all of the other people in her community did to the little boy, the police officer, the hot dog vendor, all of her neighbors, who she had taken such good care of, returned that care to her. They gave as well as taking. There's something about that that really does make food taste better or days seem brighter or companies seem sweeter, right. When there is an exchange, a connection, when we take the risk to express and share our care for each other and also have that openness to receive what's given to us.

**[00:04:14] Speaker1**

It's such an important message, I think, for us to remember, especially now after a year of so much isolation from each other. Defining our new normal means we have a chance not just to go back to the things that we miss, but to remember the people who make all those things possible, to value the people behind every single community and place and experience that we long for and love and want to be a part of. You know, one of the things I made an intentional practice when I moved into my neighborhood here in South Philadelphia eight years ago was to learn the names of the people I saw all the time in the shops that I went to up and down my street. I know that Bonnie owns the bakery where I get all my bagels. I know that Kara and Ashley are the waitresses at my favorite cafe. And every morning when I went to get my coffee, I got it from Nico or Molly or Derek or Sarah. After months or years sometimes of friendly conversation, we would end up finding each other often on Instagram or Facebook. And this past year I was so glad for that because I wasn't going out to see them every day anymore. And at this point in my life, I don't really have many other friends who work in those kinds of jobs.

**[00:05:43] Speaker1**

I don't have many friends who are servers. But all throughout this pandemic, because I knew them, I got to see firsthand how things were playing out for them, how my neighbors who worked as baristas or servers or hosts were grappling with all of this. I saw how it felt for them to be afraid to go back to work, worried that customers or even their employers sometimes might not value their safety. I also got to see what it was like for them to very much need the money and to feel torn. They held a very personal stake in these debates. I saw politicians talking about on the news, right, about extending unemployment assistance or mandating safety measures

or providing paycheck protection loans. It was a reminder to me that behind every beautiful experience that we all along to return to right now is a community of people. It's their sweat and their love, their 6:00 a.m. alarm clock, their child care that they have to arrange for their own kids. That is all a part of everything that we experience in this world. And it's so important to remember, because I think our world and especially our political debates and our economy so often turns all of those people into things. For us to consume. Those experiences become more about what they give to us rather than what those people are putting in, and we can forget about the real human beings who devote their days and lives to making everything that we experience and enjoy in our interconnected world possible.

**[00:07:50] Speaker1**

The Buddhist meditation teacher, Tik Nhat Hanh, who we quote every single week in our services at Wellspring's, he gives an illustration of this when he talks about the concept of interbeing. He says, if you are a poet. You will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. All right. Is there a cloud in a paper? Well, he says. Without a cloud, there would be no water and without water, trees can't grow. And without trees, you can't make paper. So the cloud is in here. It's inside the stuff. This paper. And he says sunshine is too hot, do you think sunshine might be in the paper? Well, he says sunshine is very important because the forest cannot grow without sunshine. And we humans cannot grow without sunshine, so the longer needs sunshine in order to cut the tree and the tree needs sunshine in order to be a tree. And he says, if you look deeply, really deeply into this piece of paper. You can see even more inside of. The cloud and the sunshine, but what else he says you can see maybe the week that grew in the field that became the bread for the logger to eat. You can see logger's father. If you look deeply with an open heart, you can see that everything is in here, everything is in this sheet of paper. And our faith, tradition, we celebrate. Interdependence. Our faith is not one where we try to find a private salvation for us, where you or I could be saved alone.

**[00:10:20] Speaker1**

Our tradition of universalism, especially, says that salvation is a collective endeavor. Salvation is a group project. And there is plenty we need saving from in this life before we even get to thinking about the next one. In our faith, no one is disposable. All of us need all of us. To survive. And so we all belong. It sounds so good to say that, but of course, I know it's harder to work that out in practice. And so that's why we try to practice it here, our spiritual communities are also not just for our private benefit, they are communities where we practice creating places where everyone can belong. Places where we stretch and exercise our minds and our hearts and our community building muscles. So we can bring that newfound strength with us when we go back into our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our schools. The whole world. A world made whole. Where everyone can trust. That they belong. So today on this inaugural belonging Sunday, I want to honor that God, even this year, under highly imperfect conditions, we have not only two hundred or so households in our community to celebrate, but we also have new households joining our community today, three new households, five adults and three young friends to welcome to Wellspring's. So I'm going to let them introduce themselves to you right now. Hi, I'm Marisa. I'm Helena and I'm Brian, and this is Francine, where the Swiderskis and we're excited to be here.

**[00:12:36] Speaker2**

Hello, were the Rieders, my name is Chris. I'm Shannon, and these are kids. Hello, I'm Ben and I'm nine. I'm Aiden and I'm 13. We live in Downingtown and we're happy to be officially Wellspring's members.

**[00:12:54] Speaker1**

And this is Whitney Ellmaker who did that thing that I have done. Were you hit record after you finished speaking instead of before technology strikes? Again, it's a pandemic. We welcome you, Whitney. Thank you all. Now, in our tradition, membership is not an obligation. It's not something that we encourage by coercion or fear. Joining our community is truly a choice. And I don't take for granted that in this time we have eight new souls choosing to practice community and belonging with us. As we do every single year, we've offered a welcome gift to our new members, this time with a socially distanced porch drop off of a bag just like this. And inside that gift, there are two things. First, there is a package of seeds. Seeds that symbolize our hope for all of our numbers, that your life will grow and blossom among us. Just like I do when we are in person and welcoming our new members, I asked for a little help today to describe what these seeds symbolize for us. So who among you out there knows the answer? What do seeds need to grow? What do plants need to grow water, their sunshine? Awesome, OK, thank you. Wait, Alex, what was that first one again? Water, right. Water, rain. Right. So to each of us new members and old, a reminder that we invite you here to share your rainy day moments with us. We know that nobody escapes tough times in this life. We've learned that this year, maybe more than ever. And when we go through difficult times, rainy days, that's not a sign that we failed.

**[00:15:05] Speaker1**

It's not a sign of weakness. It's a sign of our shared humanity. So we hope if you're struggling, that you'll let your Wellspring's community know about it and that you'll open your heart to the gifts of whatever support we can provide. All right, now, Elissa, what was that you said, what else to seeds need to grow sunshine? Oh, right, sunshine. And we hope that most weeks when you are joining us here at Wellspring's, that that's what you'll get, that you will leave here shining. That is one thing that we do promise to you and to each other that we will do our best to live out our mission, to share the charge of the soul with you, whether through wisdom or through our companionship, through opportunities to serve and do meaningful work in the world. That charges you up with joy. We hope to bring you sunshine. And finally, Jacob, what was the last thing that seeds need to grow there, right? Dirt, my favorite. You know, dirt doesn't get nearly as much good publicity as water or sunshine do, but the dirt is what we all rise up from. Every single one of us is on a journey in life that gets messy sometimes. And none of us is always neat and tidy. None of us can be perfect. So in this community, for all of us, I hope that you find a place to embrace your messy, beautiful lives, just like none of us individually is perfect. This community is not perfect either. But what we do promise is that we will do our best to be real. To be real about our mess, to be honest.

**[00:17:09] Speaker1**

To act with integrity in our relationships with one another. Because that realness, we know, can be the fertile soil for our growth together. And along with this package of seeds, there is one more thing in our new member bag. Does anybody remember what it is? That's right. It's a little pink bunny, a little pink bunny that I know so many of our current Wellspring's members still have somewhere in their own homes the highly unofficial mascot of our charged full community. And a reminder that you never need to leave your power source behind. You are a spiritual being charged full with the charge of the soul. We hope not just on Sunday mornings, but 24 hours a day and seven days a week. And that feeling of being charged full does not have to mean that everything is going well and that you are happy. What it means is that you are powered, that you are connected to a source that can renew you, that you're plugged in. The charge of the soul is here to nourish us in every single moment. And this little guy can be your reminder. We hope to carry that with you and to look for recharging stations when you need them. Hopefully this community will remain one of those places for you to recharge today and all the days to come. I am so grateful to all of you for sharing yourselves with our community, so whether in your own homes, on your own couches, in the chat with whatever emojis you choose, please join me in welcoming our newest Wellspring's members,

**[00:19:10] Speaker2**

Welcoming new members to ring. Hi, my name's Kylie. Hi, my name's Pat. Hi, my name's Zoe. Hi. I like to call you. We've been at Wellspring's for over 10 years now. Yeah, it's really fun. It is a great place for you to stay. It's really good to have you back in the world. Frank, welcome to. Explains. I knew you. Wants to I don't want it so, so, so wait.

**[00:19:54] Speaker1**

I have to say, watching Gwen say I remember when I came to Wellspring's and here I am thinking about when I visited Gwen's parents in the hospital and held her right after she was born. I remember when she came to Wellspring's to. As we close our service today, one last reminder for all of us. A reminder that we if we are here watching this together this morning, we've made it through this winter in one piece. Each of you might have forgotten also has your own packet of sunflower seeds. It was the last item in the care packages delivered to your house just before Christmas. And on this spring morning. It seems like just the right time maybe to plant something new. With the hope that we will see it blossom in the year ahead. Oh, that feels hard won this year. But a reminder that if we want our new normal to be different in any way than the time before. Then it's up to all of us working together to plant and water the seeds of what we hope to see. How wonderful it is that none of us has to do it alone. Amen. And may we all live in Blessing. I invite you to join me if you choose in the spirit of prayer. God of our hearts, creator and nurturer and sustainer of this interconnected world. A world that seems smaller and smaller with each passing year.

**[00:22:02] Speaker1**

A world where we see and know about things on a daily basis, that. Would have taken weeks or months or years to travel to us before where the information flows steadily, but the connection does not always follow. In this interdependent world, we live and help us hold Kloth close the truth that we cannot do everything, that even though we see and know so much, none of us can fix it all. And that the beauty of living in an interdependent world is that we don't have to. Help us to see these communities around us as life boats. As rope ladders. As hands reaching out to help and as spoons serving us stew. Help us remember that the communities around us can hold us. Not only that, when we hold on to those hands, we help make the net stronger to. We give thanks for the mystery and the grace of our interdependent world and for our own sense of belonging in this beloved community today. For the prayers I've spoken out loud and for the prayers that everyone with us this morning is holding silently in their hearts, we say Amen. If you enjoyed this message and would like to support the mission of Wellspring's, go to our Web site. Wellspring'suu.org. That's Wellspring's the letters UU dot org.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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