

## NAME

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## DATE

January 2, 2022

## DURATION

21m 3s

## 2 SPEAKERS

Speaker1

Speaker2

## START OF TRANSCRIPT

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

The following is a message from WellSprings congregation.

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

So this is our ritual here. New Year's Day, WellSprings, or the service closest to New Year's Day, is we, as you see today, do a bunch of songs from dearly departed musicians that we've lost in the prior year. And we do a ritual which I'm going to talk about in my brief message today, but first, what I want to say is this is this week in the life of the WellSprings band is your heaviest lift every single year, right? Because not only do you have to learn this year, it's for most often it's five new songs. That you might never perform again here, but it comes after Christmas when you're doing those songs once a year. So I just want to thank you. For being the kind of worship band. The time of the year, and let's face it, many of us are wanting to kind of dial things in, right phoned it in. But you all show up. I want to thank you for doing that and making this time of the year so distinctive. As I said before, we also have a ritual every single New Year service. Involves fire. And release and renewal and specifically of wanting to release something it's individual to each of us, although after doing this for a number of years, you see some trends, you see some common excuse me, elements and themes. What we would wish to release that holds us back from living a life most full that we really want to live.

**[00:02:03] Speaker2**

But I got a confession to make. We've been doing this for this specific service. I think this is the seventh year. Seventh year doing this, I think the first year, 2016, it was that year before Prince and Bowie and George Michael, it was just it was so obvious that we were going to do something new to honor them and we decided to add in the fire ritual as well to. But this is my confession. I have grown really ambivalent about what we're doing with the fire ritual. Really ambivalent. I love Ritual Love Release. The 12 year old in me loves fire. But what do we mean? By wanting to release something. That is holding us back. And not just what do we mean by it? But how we do it matters a great deal. There's a story in the story I love in a story that I think particularly sheds some light on what helped me name my ambivalence about this ritual. It involves Sharon Salzberg, who some of you know is the western Buddhist teacher, most associated with the with being a proponent of meta of loving kindness meditation. She tells a story. This is about maybe about 15 years after she and a couple of other Western Buddhist teachers founded the Insight Meditation Society in western Massachusetts. She was in Dharamsala, having an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. And it was an opportunity to engage in some teaching with him.

**[00:03:51] Speaker2**

And she said, What do you make of self-hatred? And the Dalai Lama looked at Sharon Salzberg like, what are you talking about? It wasn't that it was lost in translation. From English. To his language. So what do you mean by that self-hatred? She said this sense that the self is inadequate or debased or inherently broken. And he said we don't have any understanding of self-hatred in our tradition. So that sounds like that's kind of a Western thing. And that's my ambivalence about any ritual that would seek. To have us release something that does not serve us. Is this contributing to yet another way? That we judge ourselves by self-improvement. Is this contributing to yet another way in which we are buying into and expressing? This painful core belief that many of us I know I have. Carried around. For so long in our lives. That we are not enough. I mean, you would think from all the self-improvement and the billions of dollars spent on self-improvement. That American culture would be the most manifestly healthy. From a mental health perspective, culture that has ever existed. But as we all know, it is so not the case. So often. Our schemes of self-improvement to which many of us fall into this time of the year, especially. Are nothing more than dressed up. Self aggression. And it is a wonder. That's so many of our schemes for self-improvement year after year after year don't seem.

**[00:06:20] Speaker2**

To take root in us. So I wonder if I played a small part in this by leading these six services until the 7th this year of wanting to release or it's kind of a violent image if you think about it, burn up what doesn't serve you anymore? It wasn't my intention. But if I did that in some way, I want to apologize. And I want to be more clear about this year's ritual. 2021 has been like 2020, the sequel, right? And as someone who watches a lot of horror movies, the sequels are never most often very good. They just find the survivors even more exhausted and bedraggled and in denial disbelief that this thing we thought was gone is back again. This is an ornament that my wife and I have on our tree. I don't know if you can see it's a little dark. I should have upgraded the exposure there a little bit. I should have improved it. Look at me and judging myself right here right now. This is how it happens. That's 20, 20 and a dumpster fire right on top of it. Feel like many of us could just scratch out the zero in the end, put one and say, Yeah, and maybe that's why this year when we have solicited for what you might like to release. Put into the fire, we've gotten almost no responses. Maybe somehow, the collection of people called WellSprings, I've had just such an amazing 2021 that there is absolutely nothing any of us want to release.

**[00:08:08] Speaker2**

Yeah, right. I think it's rather instead. The sequel. So many of us are so exhausted. One more thing, one more request, one more message, one more opportunity for connecting with someone electronically. Give up. It's all right. Certainly not judging that. I know it, too. And yet I do believe. In rituals of release and renewal, especially after this past year. And so I want to invite us into this year. A different means of release and renewal, and yes, I do want to invite your participation if you haven't sent me anything yet. You have a couple of different ways for you to do that in just a moment. But first, I'd like you to reimagine. Releasing some part of you. Thoughts. Belief, a feeling, an anxiety, an anger towards yourself, a shame and embarrassment. And honestly, ask yourself. What you have been doing to get rid of that to this point? I believe it is almost a law of emotional physics that the more we resist what we do not like about ourselves within ourselves, the more that it persists. I would ask you to ask yourself how you have been holding. What you might like to release that, you know, does not serve you. I'm going to invite us to just here now. Hold it a little bit differently. So an exercise, a little quick meditation, it's from Russ Harris, who is a therapist and even more a teacher and a trainer, a therapist.

**[00:10:16] Speaker2**

And there's an invitation he offers about how we might work with a difficult thought, feeling memory, something we don't like about ourselves or wish to get rid of. And so I'm going to ask you right now if this is safe for you, if this feels too much too overwhelming, if you don't want to think of anything right now, that's fine. You don't have to participate. But if you are willing right now and it feels safe and you feel at least a moderate level of openness to close your eyes wherever you are. And to call to mind. Something that does not serve you. A grief, a shame and embarrassment and anxiety, a depression, a sadness, an aspect of yourself with which you have struggled for years and yet still it abides. And I'd ask you to take just a moment. To do a little bit of inventory. About what your relationship. With this thought or feeling a part of you has been like. It could be. As many of us have been trained to do. Whereas pain somehow teaches us. To want to push back or deny or to get angry at. What does not serve us or gets in the way? And if something's coming to mind for you. And you're noticing that there is a little bit of a history of some self aggression or self judgment. Or anger about the anxiety or anxiety about the anger.

**[00:11:58] Speaker2**

Or shame about the embarrassment, all these things we do that kind of build the walls. Segregating our own hearts from ourselves. And I'd like to ask you to imagine something. That if you could hold in your hand. If you could hold in your hand for a moment. This thing that does not serve this memory feeling story, thought. And imagine yourself holding it. As if. It were a precious crying baby. Or holding this as if it was the paw of a pained puppy. Or the hand? Of a dear and distraught friend. Again, no expectations, no forcing this. But just noticing what it is like if you are able to imagine. Holding this pain. This negative belief. This difficult emotion. Like, it is a precious crying baby. The poor of a pained puppy. Or the hand? Of a beloved. Distraught person for you. Just notice if that shifts anything even incrementally. In terms of how you relate. To this part of you. That holds some pain. Or even might show up in your life in destructive ways. Notice what it's like when you imagine holding it with love. And compassion. So see if you can breathe your heart open to that. Just for this moment. And if your eyes have been closed, you can open your eyes now. And just notice again, if that makes any difference, it may or may not. The stuff isn't magic. It's a practice.

**[00:14:42] Speaker2**

It's a practice that looks very much like this. Like this image? Maybe you've seen this one on social media like I have as well, too. You can't get rid of your fears, but you can learn to live with them. You see her there offering. Some tea. To the monster. Offering a little bit of tea to the monster. So many of us are taught to wage war on ourselves and on our hearts. But it does not have to be so. He's a wonderful teacher, fellow named Rainer Maria Roca. Is that quote that you might see from time to time about kind of living the questions? Being open to what is not yet resolved in your heart. That's from a book of his called Letters to a young poet. Roko also has a beautiful teaching that is very much about when I'm speaking about today. He says that imagine all those old stories, all those old stories of princes and princesses and royalty who somehow were transmuted into frogs or dragons. You know, the stories, I mean, Disney's made a mint off those stories. What's the secret? It's love. Rocha asks us that perhaps everything that terrifies us within our own hearts. Is something that needs our love. Something that is waiting for us to show up with courage. Not to confront. But to be with. Our own pain. And so that's the invitation this year that I am not ambivalent about, if you would like to participate in our ritual.

**[00:16:50] Speaker2**

And here's a different way that you can do it if you are so moved. This is my phone number. Two one five nine one three nine nine eight nine. Two one five nine one three nine nine eight nine. I expect I will be getting so many spam text soon from the people. Also, if you're watching on YouTube and you're in the chat, you can drop your answer right in there if you wish. If you wish to remain anonymous, however, you can just text me directly what I'm going to do if you send me something that you would like to release with loving kindness, with self-compassion, without self aggression. Send that to me. I will collect these and I will not burn them right away. I'll actually write them down. On individual scraps of paper and over this next week. Whether I know your name or not based on what you've written down. I will send you meta. I will send you loving kindness. And I will send to your monster. This thing you would wish to release. An invitation to be met differently. Again, I don't think this stuff is magic. But I do believe in the power of intention. That we can meet our pain differently. Someone just texted me already. Maybe it's one of the folks in the room here. Bring them in. And here's the thing. Whether you know or not, if I'm sending Metta to this part of yourself, you'd like to release or to hold with more love, you can send yourself metta whenever you wish.

**[00:18:44] Speaker2**

Especially at those moments. When you are dogged by this thing, you just cannot get rid of. That you've tried and tried and tried. And so here is a little invitation. To do it a bit differently this year. And yes, the 12 year old me in In Me loves fire, so I will put it in the fire to complete the ritual. But not before sending it. And you and us. Love. The meta, the loving kindness, the compassion that all of us deserve. Especially. When we are most in pain. Amen. I mean, you live in blessing. I'm going to ask if you would to please pray with me. To notice the breath, to notice how the breath wants to teach us how to hold space. That's so often the presence of pain naturally leads to a tightness, a tension. That many of us can hold for lifetime or lifetimes. And so instead, in this moment, a different way to approach our pain. With openness. And tenderness. To hold with love. And then to open the hand. And then to see if what we have been trying to get rid of for so long. My just take wings on its own. To know that it, too, is worthy of flight and lightness and air. So that a deeper healing might find each and every one of us.

**[00:20:49] Speaker1**

Amen. If you enjoy this message and would like to support the mission of WellSprings. Go to our web site WellSpringsuu.org, that's WellSprings the letters UU dot ORG

END OF TRANSCRIPT



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