

Everything's Connected: Exploring Relationality & Connectivity with Geodes

"People are like geodes; you never know just how beautiful they really are or what they are made of until something breaks them open."

Audrey Vivian (McIntosh) Brockman, maternal grandmother to Liam Hooper

"Every soul needs to express itself. Every heart needs to crack itself open. Every one of us needs to move from anger to healing, from denial to consciousness, from boredom to renewal. These needs did not arise yesterday. They are among the most ancient of human yearnings ..."

Rabbi Alan Lew. *This Is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared: The Days of Awe as a Journey of Transformation*. Little, Brown and Co., 2003.

"We are all related, but clearly we don't always get along."

Patty Krawec. *Becoming Kin: An Indigenous Call to Unforgetting the Past and Reimagining Our Future*, Broadleaf Books, 2022.

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These observations invite reflections on two seemingly contradictory realities:

- ~ that we, as a collective of peoples, are again experiencing deep, troubling divides
- ~ and, in truth, we are all related, whether we realize it or not...and whether we like it or not.

What Is a Geode? And Why Do I Have One?

A geode is a spherical or egg-shaped rock, characterized by a hollow cavity lined with some type of crystalline minerals deposited by groundwater or hydrothermal fluids. The type of crystals found in a geode is determined by the kind of host rock—igneous or sedimentary—and by the particulate matter that seeps into the cavity as it is forming.

This geode is given to you with an invitation to participate in an activity centered around exploring your rock and considering discussion prompts. The activity requires cracking open your geode, exploring what it reveals to you, and relating your findings to the heart labor of relational fellowship. You are invited to engage in this exercise, in whole or in part, or choose to do something else.

Whether you decide to explore it or not, this particular geode is yours to keep.

Why Have I Been Given a Sock?

Although it is certainly not required, this activity was designed to be engaged in pairs. Because a sock is also necessary for safety during the activity, it seemed like good fun to create our paired connections based on sock pairings. Said another way, somewhere in the room—virtual or in-person—another person has the mate to your sock. The 2 of you are, essentially, sock buddies. Once you find your partner, you are invited to crack open your geodes—and your conversation—together.

Suggested discussion prompts/questions are provided as possible points of departure to guide your conversation. These are, of course, only suggestions.

The themes we are exploring this year offer rich opportunities for bridging the two seemingly conflicting realities that not only frame programming themes for the year, but also describe our earthly reality—that we are kindred suffering significant social divides. It seems likely these lines of inquiry will also inspire and enliven continued reflection, analysis, and interpretation. At the very least, our readings offer potential wisdoms, insights, and various practices for cultivating relational connection making and reaching across divides. As such, it occurred to me that the topics we have

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before us both deserve and might require ongoing conversations.

Remembering the practice of paired conversations many of us engaged in our Fellowship experiences, this year especially, it seemed as if we might all benefit from encouragement to stay in touch, to keep talking and listening and discovering together. That said, you are invited (but not required) to continue building relationship with your sock buddy.

Instructions for Breaking Your Rock

~ Gather the following equipment:

- your geode
- a hammer (another heavier rock or some other implement with which you can strike your rock)
- your sock

~ Locate a hard, stable surface (such as the floor, fireplace hearth, sidewalk, etc.)

~ Put your geode into the toe of your sock

~ Strike the geode with your hammer; this may require a little force and you might have to hit the rock more than once

~ Once you have successfully broken the geode, roll your sock back, take out the pieces and examine them

Suggested Reflection and Discussion Prompts

~ What do you see? Describe the walls of your geode:

Are there crystals? If so, are they large or small? What color are they?

~ Compare the interior to the exterior of your rock. What assumptions had you made about the rock based on its external characteristics? What expectations did you form about what you would find inside your particular geode?

~ Compare your and your partner's geodes? What similarities do you note? What differences?

~ Considering Grandma Brockman's musings comparing people to geodes, what are your thoughts about her analogy? What kinds of experiences do you think might inspire such a comparison?

~ Consider Rabbi Lew's observations. What are your thoughts? What comes to mind for you? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

~ What was this exercise like for you? What (if any) thoughts, insights, questions, hopes, etc. come to mind?

~ In your experience, what is necessary, or required, for fostering the kind of vulnerability that leads to connection-making, growth, and relational deepening?

~ Similarly, what practices do you think might offer pathways toward building connectedness and healing our divides? Is mending possible? What do you envision we can begin doing in our lives, close groups, and larger communities?

~ What (if anything) will you take with you from this exercise? What will you leave behind?