**“I Am” Poems: Spirituality Night**

Prompt/Homework before the gathering: Bring a tangible item or two that demonstrate your spiritual formation. Photo, book, poem, cloth, mug, etc.

**Outline of the evening (approximately 45-60 minutes):**

* *Intro, altar building (5 minutes)*
* *The Invitation, Oriah Mountain Dreamer (5 minutes)*
* *I Am From Activity (15-20 minutes)*
* *Each person share part of poem and what they brought for the altar space (5 minutes per person)*
* *Questions/Comments after sharing if applicable (5)*
* *Check out- each person offers a word, feeling, or expression of affirmation closing the space (5 minutes)*

**Materials Needed**

* Paper or journals for participants to write their “I am” poem
* Writing Utensils- pens, pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.
* Candle
* Altar space- identify a table or space to co-create your altar
* Individuals bring: spiritual formation tangible item

**Introduction**

The facilitator welcomes the group together. Identify a flat surface (table, boxes piled with a table cloth covering, etc.) to create a group altar for the gathering. It can be helpful to light a candle in the space or on the altar to invite a reflective space. This can be especially helpful if the gathering space is multipurpose- what makes our living room space particularly spirit filled during this time versus our community time together or when hosting guests. The facilitator invites those gathered to place their tangible item on the altar and leads the group in the opening prayer.

**Opening Prayer: The Invitation, Oriah Mountain Dreamer**

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shriveled and closed from fear of further pain! I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it or fade it, or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own, if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, to be realistic, to remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself; if you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul; if you can be faithless and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see beauty even when it's not pretty, every day, and if you can source your own life from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still stand on the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, “Yes!”

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up, after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone, and do what needs to be done to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied. I want to know what sustains you, from the inside, when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.

**I Am From Poem Activity (Spirituality/Reflection Emphasis)**

Instructions: Take 15 minutes to write a poem entitled “I Am From”. Using the prompts below, write a series of sentences that begin with “I Am From”. Then we will choose to read some or all of our sentences to each other. Provide participants with

**Example:**I am from running around the neighborhood with the pastor’s son, and jumping from rock to rock by the church driveway.

I am from footprints in the sand and dad praying for dinner, from a God that smites and yet still loves the sinner?

I am from the God of Abraham, of Cynthia, of Kazuaki, of Father Joseph.

I am from an old white man, white beard, golden robes, who somehow cared when this Japanese American boy burned his mouth on hot rice.

I am from “ask, seek, knock” and a divine force that requires initiative and grit before opening up the heavenly gates to see who’s groveling at the doorstep.

I am from stained glass, velvet pews in a sanctuary adjacent to horse stables, nestled gently in the Estates.

I am from Big Sky prairies, and a faith that binds oppressor and oppressed, crusader and infidel, owner and slave.

I am from closed eyes, folded hands, praying to God. From drumbeats as external heartbeats, tears and sweat dripping mingled into fir boughs, songs as pleas to the Creator.

I am from the edges of faith, where certainty looks a lot like doubt. I am here to break down, sift, rebuild.

**Prompts you can choose from:**

* How you were introduced to spirituality
* Books, Poems, or Phrases that have shaped you
* Lessons you’ve learned
* People who impacted your spirituality
* Your earliest image of the divine
* Phrases your caregivers used relating to spirituality
* The landscape in which you grew up or encountered the divine
* Causes that are near and dear to your heart
* Formative experiences
* Things you believe in
* Values that inform your life
* Anything else!

**Sharing**

Using mutual invitation, each person is invited to share (or pass, or pass for now) on what they brought as their spiritual altar item as well as part or all of their “I am” poem. There is a space for comment or reflection after all sharing has occurred- what resonated with others? What did you learn about someone else gathered?

**Closing**

Group closes with a go-round of a brief check out- a word of affirmation for the time together, how they are leaving the space, or other types of closing that fits your particular group.