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## **GROWING EDGE Conversation Starter—July, 2020**

### **Episode 23: “A Ritual to Read to Each Other”**

#### **July Questions of the Month**

In this **Growing Edge Podcast**, Carrie and Parker explore William Stafford’s poem, *A Ritual to Read to Each Other*. Taking one verse at a time, we talk about the light the poem sheds on this moment of national awakening. The work required to rid the U.S. of structural racism has been left undone for 240 years, so the road ahead is long and we need light to find our way. If that work feels like your work, as it does to us, please take a listen. Then reflect on the questions the poem raised for us, or the questions it raises for you. Here are a few of the questions we pursued, one for each of the poem’s five verses:

- (1) From your own life, do you have stories about what it means to follow “the wrong god” home, misled by “a pattern that others made”?
- (2) Can you think of examples of childhood challenges that show up in adult life to make things difficult once again?
- (3) How do you understand the poet’s claim that it’s “cruel” to “know what occurs but not recognize the fact”?
- (4) What does it take to speak truthfully with family, friends, and colleagues instead of trying to fool each other?

(5) To what can you say a clear “yes,” to what a clear “no,” and to what must you say “maybe”?

Before listening to the podcast, please have the poem handy. You can download it from our website **HERE**.

### **Some Approaches to this Month’s Question**

You may want to explore the podcast and Questions of the Month privately, through journaling and silent reflection. But we urge you to consider gathering online for an exploration with one or more family members or friends. If that idea appeals to you, look into using Zoom, Facetime, Skype or some other video platform or talk with each other while practicing safe social distancing.

If you aren’t familiar with [Zoom](#), it’s easy to learn and has proven a wonderful way to host “face to face” conversations during the pandemic. A full-featured Basic Plan with unlimited meetings is free. There’s a 40 minute time limit on conversations among three or more, but you can log right back on for another 40 minutes. If the technology baffles you, check for online instructions, or get on the phone and ask any middle-schooler you know!

For group explorations, we first listen to the podcast individually or together. Then, before you meet, review the [Circle of Trust Touchstones](#) from the [Center for Courage & Renewal](#). They’re designed to create safe space for open-hearted dialogue on a wide range of topics.

As convener, read the Touchstones aloud—or ask others to read them aloud—and let people comment on them if they wish. Remind people of how important it is to make sure everyone gets ample time to speak and be heard. Then take a moment of quiet before inviting people to speak.

Begin the conversation by reading the Questions of the Month, then inviting people to respond whenever they are ready. No “forced marches” around the circle! As the Touchstones advise, listen to what people have to say without any cross-talk. Ask honest and open questions to help them say more, if they wish, but avoid trying to “fix, save, advise, or correct each other.”

We need to find every way we can to reweave community during these hard times—and one of those ways is gathering online for conversations about things that matter. Give it a try!