



# SUMMER BOOK STUDY

## REFLECTIONS 2023

### WITH GRATITUDE

This year, we provided compassionate book lovers two choices for a four-week summer book study experience. In July, we discussed Karen Armstrong's *Sacred Nature*, and in August, we met for Sharon Salzberg's *Real Life*. Our book studies are opportunities for participants to expand their compassion skills in a casual space of meaningful conversation. Volunteer and book study champion Marlin Murdock (*Sacred Nature*) and Board Chair Pam Lewis (*Real Life*) are truly grateful for the vibrant discussions, insightful reflections, and connections both groups forged during the studies.

### REAL LIFE

Salzberg's book opened our hearts to the power of mindfulness and self-compassion. In her weekly email reflection with the group, Pam Lewis cited Andy Puddicombe, (former monk and founder, Headspace) : *"When we resist a thought, emotion or circumstance, we reject life as it is. This creates further tension and suffering in the mind."* *Real Life* has taught us to find solace, peace and joy in the present moment, invaluable lessons to adapt a positive mindset and spread the ripple effect of positivity wherever we go.

### SACRED NATURE

Karen Armstrong gives us a rich and in depth look at the sacredness of nature. Murdock reflects on the book: *"The first part of the book was filled with a deep wisdom and appreciation of ideas and practices that were essential in past cultures and religions. She encouraged us to adopt a new connection and view of the world in which our hearts and minds need to change if we are to regain this reverence for our beautiful fragile planet."* Armstrong's words remind us that nature is not merely a backdrop to our lives but an essential part of our existence. Let's carry forward this newfound appreciation for Mother Earth and strive to become better stewards of our planet.

Stay tuned for our next book studies!

### INSIGHTS OF PARTICIPANTS

Here is Debbie with her reflection on the *Real Life* book study, offered in collaboration with our partner, Insight Meditation Houston. Debbie expressed her deep gratitude for Pam Lewis' facilitation skills and extends her appreciation to Marlin Murdock as a vital asset to the group and to all participants' thoughtfulness. *"Everyone was considerate of everyone else and the conversation just flowed. I would highly recommend anyone to join one of these (Compassionate Houston's) book readings if possible. It will add so much value to your life."*

*Sacred Nature's* study group embraced Armstrong's invitation and reconnected with many of the myths of past spiritual traditions along with a refreshing and personal embrace of practices that will sustain and support us as we face the challenges of climate change.

Jerome was influenced by *Real Life* and Salzberg's view on *"... cynicism is often valued over inspiration, and love is seen as simply being naive..."*

Jerome is already incorporating Salzberg's observation into his own writing about the cynicism of young college students.

Another of Jerome's highlights was Salzberg's view on interconnectedness and interdependence as described in Indra's Net: *"... to look at others is to see ourselves as well. Every event, every entity, every emotion, every experience we have is born out of a web of interconnectedness."* (Sharon Salzberg)

What a great takeaway from *Real Life*, urging us to live with mindfulness, compassion, and the sense of responsibility towards the well-being of all beings and the world we inhabit.