

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
Session Special Edition (Part I): Create Your Own Session Plan
Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA, submitted by Stephen Hughes, June 2019

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting:

“I’m going to be discussing global warming next week, it’s quite a heated topic.”

~ *Pun Of The Day website*

Check In: If possible, share a time in the last few weeks where you thought of something that was discussed at a previous Small Group Ministry session. Otherwise, share something significant that has occurred over the last few weeks.

Objective:

Your group objective is to write one (only one – aren’t you lucky) new and original lesson plan that could be used (with your permission) for a Small Group Ministry discussion. Following is a suggested step by step process of how to go about this project. Feel free to adapt, modify, or ignore this process as you see fit as you proceed in creating your session plan. Two pages are included: 1) a list of topic words to help you all in brainstorming a new topic, and 2) a session plan template in Word format that you can either write or type your final fantastic new session plan.

Step 1: Determining The Topic

- A) Each member of your group should briefly describe a session plan topic that they thought was particularly interesting to them. After each person describes their favorite session topic, the group should briefly discuss the following questions.
 - 1) What made this topic particularly memorable compared to other topics?
 - 2) Are there related topics of discussion that would also be interesting?
 - 3) Do the topics described so far form a pattern or have similarities to one another?

- B) Take a few minutes to read through the list of topic words (or phrases) and list of previous topics provided on the included pages. Pick out at least one that you find intriguing, interesting, or that you would like to find out more about. Each person should share which word or phrase he/she chose and their reasons for choosing it. After each person shares their word or phrase the group should briefly discuss the following questions.
 - 1) Does this word or phrase have spiritual meaning, power, or tension?
 - 2) What kinds of feelings or thoughts does this word or phrase provoke?
 - 3) What questions do you have about this work or phrase that you would want to explore?

- C) Each member of the group should suggest a new topic that could be used to build a session plan and why they would find it interesting. The facilitator of the group

should make a list of each of the topics and take notes as he/she feels appropriate. Note that topics should be as specific as possible. Avoid totally open ended topics like The Meaning of Religion. After each person describes their new topic, the group should briefly discuss the following questions.

- 1) Why would this be a good topic to build a new session plan around?
- 2) What issues could be explored as a part of this topic?
- 3) What questions could be asked that would help a group discussion regarding this topic?
- 4) Are there spiritual issues attached to this topic or issues that directly impact on your everyday life?
- 5) Would a discussion of this topic help to help you find or give your life meaning?

D) The facilitator should read the list of topics. A group discussion should place the topics in order from 1) the most “popular” to 10) the least “popular”.

Step 2: Gathering Material (HOMEWORK!)

- A) The facilitator should provide each member by e-mail or other means the three most popular topics. Each member should research the Internet, library, books, or other resources and find at least one relevant quote and one “profound” question related to each of the three topics. Members can write these on a copy of the session plan template provided. Please bring these with you for the next meeting for Part II of Create Your Own Lesson Plan.

Step 3: Stay tuned for the next session plan – Part II of Create Your Own Session Plan

Checkout Likes and Wishes: How did you feel about the process of choosing the most “popular” topic?

“I love quotations because it is a joy to find thoughts one might have, beautifully expressed with much authority by someone recognized wiser than oneself.”

~ *Marlene Dietrich*

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Opening Words and Chalice Lighting:

"None of us is as smart as all of us." ~*Ken Blanchard*

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."
~*Henry Ford*

Check In: Share some aspect of the process of doing your HOMEWORK from the last session.

Thoughts to Consider:

- The process of brainstorming, gathering information, and choosing the parts of a session plan is an iterative / circular process. The only rule is that there are no rules. Feel free to move from one of the steps to another as required to get to the final goal – a new cool session plan.
- Humor definitely has its place and can add both interest and engagement, probably most easily in the opening and closing words.
- Over the years, so many session plans have been written, that it may be hard to come up with a totally “new” topic. Feel free to write a “sequel” where the topic is viewed from a new, controversial, or humorous perspective, or fueled by information in a new or different format. The use of graphics, videos, props, role playing, etc. can be considered.
- Good luck and enjoy the process.

Objective:

Your group objective is to write one (only one – aren't you lucky) new and original lesson plan that could be used (with your permission) for a Small Group Ministry discussion. Following is a continuation of a suggested step by step process of how to go about this project. Feel free to adapt, modify, or ignore this process as you see fit as you proceed in creating your session plan. You should have your HOMEWORK, or one quote and one “profound” question about each of the three chosen topics. Your facilitator should also have a session plan template in Word format to write the final selected quotes and questions. Happy session planning.

Step 3: Reviewing the HOMEWORK or Choosing the Quotes. Start with the topic that was rated number 1 from Part I the previous week.

- B) Each member of your group should read the quote (or quotes) that they researched for this topic. The group should then briefly discuss the following questions.
- 4) Which quotes seemed the most interesting and would lead to a good discussion?
 - 5) Which quotes seem to fit together and relate to a single topic?
 - 6) Which quote would best serve as opening words?
 - 7) Which quote would best serve as closing words?

- C) If the topic is very compelling and seems to be a “winner,” write the selected quotes on the included session plan template under opening words, focus readings, and closing words and move on to Step 4. If not, then move on to the topic that was rated number 2 and then number 3.

Step 4: Reviewing the HOMEWORK or Choosing the Focus Questions.

- A) Each member of the group should read the question (or questions) for the presently selected topic. The group should briefly discuss the following questions.
- 6) Which questions relate to the chosen topic and the chosen quotes?
 - 7) Which questions facilitate discussion and engage people to think about the topic?
 - 8) Which questions bring into play spiritual issues, the meaning of life, or issues that directly impact on people’s everyday lives?
- E) If the questions fit the question criteria and topic, a “winner,” write the selected questions on the included session plan template under focus questions and move on to Step 5. If not, then return to Step 3 and choose another topic.

Step 5: Naming The Session Plan

- B) Have the facilitator quickly read through the entire developed session plan. Discuss and make any last minute comments and revisions.
- C) Members should propose an appropriate name for the new session plan and a discussion should continue until one is chosen (hopefully unanimously). The facilitator should fill in the session plan name on the session plan template.

Step 6: As a final step add a Check In and a Check Out to the session plan template.

Step 7: Submit your group’s session plan to one of the ministers or at the next facilitator’s meeting.

Check Out: Was the process of choosing the parts of the session plan smooth or somewhat contentious? How could the process have been made better?



Session Plan Topic Word List Culled From Wikipedia

- Paranormal
 - Anomalous operation
 - Extra-sensory perception
 - Near-death experience
 - Paraphysics
 - Parapsychology
 - Precognition
 - Psychokinesis
 - Remote viewing
- Philosophy
 - Dualism
 - Epistemology
 - Ethics
 - Free will
 - Idealism
 - Materialism
 - Metaphysics
 - Mechanism
 - Mind-body problem
 - Noumenon
 - Nondualism
 - Phenomenalism
 - Phenomenon
 - Philosophy of mind
 - Philosophy of religion
 - Philosophy of science
 - Reductionism
 - Spiritualism
 - Skepticism
 - Truth
 - Vitalism
- Religion
 - Agnosticism
 - Animism
 - Atheism
 - Cult
 - Faith
 - Gnosticism
 - God
 - Goddess
 - Higher consciousness
 - Monotheism
- Mythology
- neo-Pantheism
- New religious movement
- Pantheism
- Polytheism
- Prayer
- religious naturalism
- Soul
- Spiritual being
- Spiritism
- Science
 - Altered state of consciousness
 - Brain
 - Chaos Theory
 - Chemistry
 - Cognitive psychology
 - Consciousness
 - Magical thinking
 - Neuropsychology
 - Odic force
 - Paraphysics
 - Parapsychology
 - Physics
 - Pseudoscience
 - Psychiatry
 - Psychology
 - Quantum Mechanics
 - Superstition
 - Unconscious mind
- Spirituality
 - Esotericism
 - Karma
 - Meditation
 - Mysticism
 - New Age
 - Occultism
 - Reincarnation
 - Subtle body

- Unconscious mind
- Religions
 - Mysticism
 - Buddhism
 - Zen
 - Hinduism
 - I Ching
 - Sikhism
 - Taoism
 - Universal Dialectic
 - Ying Yang
 - Christianity
 - Catholicism
 - Christian Science
 - Islam
 - Judaism
 - Sufism
 - Rosicrucian
- Miscellaneous
 - Unconscious mind
 - Subtle body
 - Chakra
 - Kundalini energy
 - Planes of existence
 - Spiritual paths
 - Tarot reading
 - Universal Life
 - Salvation
 - Faith healing
 - Astrology
 - Divination
 - Fortune-telling
 - Lucid dream
 - Out-of-body experience
 - Knights Templar
 - Servants of the Light
- Alchemy
- Esotericism
- Anthroposophy
- Omen
- Cartomancy
- Universal Life
- Unconscious mind
- People
 - Ken Wilber
 - Abdul Karid Janji
 - Edgar Cayce
 - Evelyn Underhill
 - G. I. Gurdjieff
 - Master Beinsa Douno
 - Rudolf Steiner
 - Constant Chevillon
 - Dion Fortune
 - Master Beinsa Douno
 - Max Heindel
 - Samuel Liddell
 - MacGregor Mathers
 - Baron Carl Reichenbach
 - Unconscious mind
- Added
 - Love
 - Meaning of Life
 - Social Responsibility
 - Climate Change
 - Fear of the Unknown
 - Inevitability of Change
 - Creation of the Universe
 - Life's Goals
 - Freedom of Choice
 - Predictability
 - Patterns of Behavior