

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SMALL GROUP MINISTRY NETWORK WEBSITE
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SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
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“Adventure”
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Opening Words

“What is that feeling when you're driving away from people and they recede on the plain till you see their specks dispersing? - it's the too-huge world vaulting us, and it's good-bye. But we lean forward to the next crazy venture beneath the skies.” – Jack Kerouac

Chalice Lighting

(James Vila Blake), adapted

(In unison) Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law. This is our covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, to serve human need, and to help one another.

Check-In: How is it with your spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? (2-3 sentences)

Claim Time for Deeper Listening: This comes at the end of the gathering where you can be listened to uninterrupted for more time if needed. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes, and to honor the limit of the time that you claim.

Wisdom Story: “Delicious Ambiguity” by Marisol Caballero

Ask for a person from the group to read this story, or take turns reading it as a group.

How is it that I, a minister and known skeptic, am able to a) not run around screaming that the sky is falling and, b) do my job at all? This question perplexes those belonging to religious traditions that offer comfort in the form of certainty.

For some, answers to life’s toughest questions offer reassurance that there is order in this chaotic world and in our sometimes chaotic lives. For others, such as myself, the Great Mystery does not cause panic, but instead eases my mind, reminding me that I don’t have to understand or know everything; that we are all just feeling our way through this life together. No one is an expert. Which, for those who expect a minister to be an expert at all things crucial and who look to clergy to get them through the most difficult days of their lives with reassuring certainties, I would definitely not be the one to call on.

As a chaplain, I once had a patient who was dying. Though he was unable to speak, he would communicate by writing on a legal pad. He told me that he was afraid. I asked him what he was afraid of. He wrote, “I’ve never done it before...”

This patient was deeply Catholic, yet I knew him well enough to understand that his honesty about the unknown was more a request to witness the reality of his anxiety about the unknown, rather than to disabuse him of it. Questions of the hereafter have always struck me as the easiest to enjoy for their ambiguity. It’s almost as if I don’t want any spoilers on the surprise adventure that awaits me after I die.

Lately, however, it seems that so much of our living world, the here and now, is more topsy-turvy than usual. It’s a human spiritual need to want to make sense out of the events of our lives.

We not only want, but need life's unexpected changes to have a deeper meaning. If not a "perfect ending" or poems that rhyme, we would at least appreciate "a clear beginning, middle, and end" every once in a while. It's much harder to treat daily ambiguities as adventures we should face with excitement, especially as big changes seem to have a way of raining down all at once.

The longer I live, the more I am taught the same lesson, over and over, by wildly different circumstances: the more I expect the unexpected; the more I roll with the punches of life's tragedies and revel in life's joys and victories; the more I give in to the reality that I am not as in charge of and cannot plan as much of this life as I would like, the more I can fully experience and even come to enjoy the deliciousness of my journey's ambiguity.

Readings from the Common Bowl:

Ask members from the group to read the quotes, one at a time, until all of the quotes have been read.

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to."

"I don't much care where –"

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go." – Lewis Carroll

"If we were meant to stay in one place, we'd have roots instead of feet." – Rachel Wolchin

"Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing." – Helen Keller

"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness." – Mark Twain

"Why do you go away? So that you can come back. So that you can see the place you came from with new eyes and extra colors. And the people there see you differently, too. Coming back to where you started is not the same as never leaving." – Terry Pratchett

"It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to." – Bilbo Baggins, as told by J.R.R. Tolkien

"Jobs fill your pockets, but adventures fill your soul." – Jaime Lyn

"Adventure may hurt you, but monotony will kill you." – Marcus Purvis

"And into the forest I go, to lose my mind and find my soul." – John Muir

"Attitude is the difference between an ordeal and an adventure." – Bob Bitchin

"Adventure is not outside man; it is within." – Mary Ann Evans, writing as George Eliot

"Sometimes getting lost is not a waste of time." – Unknown

Sitting in Silence: Sit in silence together, allowing the Readings from the Common Bowl to resonate. Cultivate a sense of calm and attention to the readings and the discussion that follows (Living the Questions).

Reading:

“Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming ‘Wow! What a Ride!’” – Hunter S. Thompson

Sharing

Round 1: Living Adventure

What does adventure mean to you? How can adventure be a spiritual practice?

Round 2: Living the Questions

During this round, participants are asked to answer one or more of the questions that speak to them, to create their own question, or to speak more about what adventure means to them.

1. When is a time you felt adventurous? How did this sense of adventure make you feel?
2. How have the type of adventures you take changed as you've aged? How has your sense of adventure changed?
3. Some of our quotes speak to travel as adventure, but is travel the only way to be adventurous? When was a time you engaged in adventure close to home?
4. Bob Bitchin says the difference between an ordeal and an adventure is attitude. What does an attitude of adventure mean to you? How can we bring this attitude into our lives when we feel they've become monotonous?
5. If you had unlimited time, what sorts of adventures would you take? Where is your heart leading you in thinking about a sense of adventure?

Round 3: Further Thoughts

In the remaining time for sharing, sharing any further thoughts you have about adventure or any reflections that came up for you from another participant's sharing. This round is more informal, and discussion is allowed.

Deeper Listening: If time was claimed by individuals, the group listens without interruption to each person for the time claimed. Using a timer allows the facilitator to also listen fully.

Checking-Out: One sentence about where you are now as a result of the time spent together and the experience of exploring the theme.

Extinguishing Chalice: (Elizabeth Selle Jones) We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Closing Words: (Rev. Philip R. Giles)

(In unison) *May the quality of our lives be our benediction and a blessing to all we touch.*

Closing Song