

**Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website**  
**Covenant Group Session**  
**ARISE!**  
**Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist, Palatine, IL**

Give group members the preparation page for this session (attached at the end of document.)

**Preliminaries**

**Chalice Lighting and Reading**

"You who have eye for miracles regard the bud now appearing on the bare branch of the fragile young tree.

It's a mere dot, a nothing.

But already it's a flower, already a fruit, already its own death and resurrection."

-- Hymnal #625, Diego Valeri

**Check-in.**

**Transition Meditation**

Help the group move from check-in preliminaries to silence with directed deep breathing, soft words, music, or other meditative techniques.

**Meditation Reading**

There will come a day--  
it is not far off now--  
when you wake up in the morning and know  
you were meant to be happy  
and that you want it  
more than you want  
things, or memories  
any concrete place called home  
all the strings of the past that fasten you,  
more than you want  
justice or pride:  
your old clay image of yourself  
or the faint chance  
that all that has gone wrong  
may still change.

It is you who hold  
the power to change.

And whatever it is that holds you  
whatever it is you think you can not live without  
the time has come to open your hands and  
let it go.

Run  
flee  
disappear  
break loose  
take wing

fly by night  
move like a meteor  
be gone.

If you fear it will never be possible  
think of Harriet  
who traveled alone  
the first time  
who finally freed three hundred people  
but first  
had to free  
herself.  
--"Poem for Flight" by Becky Bertha (Quaker poet)

### **Deep Sharing/Deep Listening**

Today, we'll be sharing how each of us has experienced acceptance (or rejection) because of our beliefs, and how a community has supported us in spiritual growth.

#### *Facilitator questions*

1. Share a story of when you experienced a passion cycle in your own life. What happened? How did you overcome it?
2. Since passion cycles happen in our lives all the time, where are you now in the cycle?
3. What helps us move through the cycle? The care and compassion of friends? Faith? Hope? True grit?
4. Do you believe in the cycle? Is it possible to "arise" from every fall?

### **Check-out**

#### **Closing Reading/Extinguishing the Chalice**

"Help us to be the always hopeful  
gardeners of the spirit  
who know that without darkness  
nothing comes to birth  
as without light  
nothing flowers."  
-- Hymnal #691, May Sarton

### **Amen and Blessed Be**

# Preparation for CCUU Session: **ARISE!**

## **Food for Thought**

Christians call it “the Passion” -- the cycle of life to death to life that plays out each year during Holy Week. They are honoring and celebrating the journey of Jesus of Nazareth, but this “remembering” is much more than memory and ritual, starting with giving up chocolate and ending with gifts of chocolate bunnies. Even for the devout, it is more than walking in the steps of Jesus as he carried his cross through the streets of Jerusalem.

It is walking in their own shoes, in the shoes of all humanity who frequently experience the “passion” cycle in their own lives and live within the universal natural cycle that mirrors it.

The seasons. The greening of spring, abundance of summer, diminishment of fall, the death of winter, and once again the greening of spring – this is a passion we participate in every year of our lives. We are part of it, day by day, as it unfolds. So, too, does it unfold in our own lives. Triumph and tragedy. Happiness and sadness. Success and failure. Youth and age. Life and death. We live out the passion constantly in big and small ways.

There are many sacred scriptures, stories, myths, and legends that describe this cycle as well. Noah’s ark and the flood but one of many examples in the Hebrew scriptures. So many of these stories exist because there has always been a need to express our confusion and wonderment at this cycle of life. For no matter how bleak things look, the beginning and ending point of the passion is joy. **ARISE!** Lift yourself up. Feel the sun on your face and know there is something larger than yourself.

## **Some questions to consider**

5. Share a story of when you experienced a passion cycle in your own life. What happened? How did you overcome it?
6. Since passion cycles happen in our lives all the time, where are you now in the cycle?
7. What helps us move through the cycle? The care and compassion of friends? Faith? Hope? True grit?
8. Do you believe in the cycle? Is it possible to “arise” from every fall?

## **Meditation Readings**

“Spring is sprung, the grass is riz. I wonder where the birdies is.”

-- Red Skelton

“What goes around comes around.”

-- traditional “Karmic” saying

“We need celebration that speaks the Spring-inspired word about life and death, about us as we live and die, through all the cycling seasons, days, and years.

We need the sense of deity to crack our own hard, brown December husks and push life out of inner tombs and outer pain.

Unless we move the seasons of the self, and Spring can come for us, the Winter will go on and on.

And Easter will remain a myth, and life will never come again, despite the fact of Spring”.

--*Singing the Living Tradition* # 627, Max Coats

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-- *Singing the Living Tradition* #625, Diego Valeri

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"Wake, now, my senses, and hear the earth call;  
feel the deep power of being in all;  
keep, with the web of creation your vow,  
giving, receiving as love shows us how.

Wake, now, my reason, reach out to the new;  
join with each pilgrim who quests for the true;  
honor the beauty and wisdom of time;  
suffer thy limit, and praise the sublime."

--*Singing the Living Tradition* #298, "Wake, Now My Senses"