

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY Plan for Facilitators

**Community**

Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA September 2004

**Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:** From Henry Nelson Wieman

“Religious faith is basically an act—the act of giving one’s self into the keeping of what commands faith, to be transformed by it, and to serve it above all. More specifically, it is the act of deciding to live in the way required by the source of human good [and] to maintain association with a fellowship practicing that commitment....”

**Reflection/Personal Sharing/Prayer** (approximately 30 minutes)

(The facilitator should briefly remind the group of confidentiality/anonymity, that this is not the time for cross conversation, etc.)

**Focus Readings:** From Raymond Baughan

"We deceive ourselves if we think we can be grasped by life's meaning, or a sense of the holy, before we find and are found by our fellow human beings. There is no sense of the sacredness of life, no sense of the holiness of sheer existence that does not come first through another person. Human encounter is common: human acceptance is rare. Religious community is people reaching through all the facades people carefully place around them—people embracing people where they live and struggle, what Henry Nelson Wieman calls 'creative interchange.' The most radical contribution religion can make to human living is that it enables people to experience community as starkly as hunger.... Where life has a chance, we are in caring and in mutual need. When we are most alive, we are in the presence of someone or something intensely with us.... Nothing is experienced except in relation. It is participation in a religious community that stabs our consciousness into this awareness in the midst of a society that knows nothing about it."

From Anonymous: “No child can escape her community.... The life of the community flows about her, foul or pure; she swims in it, goes to sleep in it, and wakes to the new day to find it still about her. He belongs to it; it nourishes him, or starves him, or poisons him; it gives them the substance of their lives.”

**Focus Questions:**

What different communities have affected you and how?

Which communities have you felt closer to and why?

What has been your experience of your work, school, and neighborhood communities?

What has been your experience of this church community?

In what way might you say your experience here is religious/spiritual?

**Checkout/Likes and Wishes** (This is the time for facilitators to ask participants what they liked about this meeting and what they might wish for future meetings. This is also the time for any discussion of logistics.)

**Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice:** From Howard Thurman

“A strange necessity has been laid upon me to devote my life to the central concern that transcends the walls that divide and would achieve in literal fact what is experienced as literal truth; human life is one and all [people] are members of one another. And this insight is spiritual and it is the core of religious experience.”