

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website



**Wednesday Small Group Session
Conformity**

Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church, Hayward, CA, 29 September 2021, 2:00 to 4:00 PM

OPENING SONG: You've Got to Do What You Want to Do (From South Park)

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yR6X-3Zzvic>>

CHALICE LIGHTING / PRELUDE **0.5 min**

Alas, everything that men say to one another is alike; the ideas they exchange are almost always the same, in their conversation. But inside all those isolated machines, what hidden recesses, what secret compartments! It is an entire world that each one carries within him, an unknown world that is born and dies in silence! What solitudes all these human bodies are!

Alfred De Musset

OPENING WORDS **1.0 min**

The plague of mankind is the fear and rejection of diversity: monotheism, monarchy, monogamy and, in our age, monomedicine. The belief that there is only one right way to live, only one right way to regulate religious, political, sexual, medical affairs is the root cause of the greatest threat to man: members of his own species, bent on ensuring his salvation, security, and sanity.

Thomas Szasz

The uncertainties in life are so uncertain for us to determine the kind woe we shall be entangled in in the next future. When you stay dormant, your life is at risk; when you dare to take a step, you take a step to take a risk. We have a choice. Yes! a choice to choose to dare to get to our real reasons on earth or to choose to live in mediocrity and conformity, but we ought to note that, it is riskier to risk nothing when the life we live is always at risk.

Ernest Agyemang Yeboah

MEDITATION / CENTERING **1 min**

The first sound of the gong brings us to silence. Please take time to center yourself, and temporarily push aside whatever might be preventing you from participating fully in this session. The second sound of the gong returns us to each other's presence.

CHECK-IN (2 ROUNDS) **40 min**

Please share some thing(s) about your life since last we met.

SONG: UNIFORMS (written and performed by Peter Alsop)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5JWq_HblfM

QUOTES ABOUT CONFORMITY**10 min**

The opposite for courage is not cowardice, it is conformity. Even a dead fish can go with the flow.

Jim Hightower

The reward for conformity is that everyone likes you but yourself.

Rita Mae Brown

Morality is a test of our conformity rather than our integrity. *Jane Rule*

The human race is a herd. Here we are, unique, eternal aspects of consciousness with an infinity of potential, and we have allowed ourselves to become an unthinking, unquestioning blob of conformity and uniformity. A herd. Once we concede to the herd mentality, we can be controlled and directed by a tiny few. And we are.

David Icke

To be one's self, and unafraid whether right or wrong, is more admirable than the easy cowardice of surrender to conformity.

Irving Wallace

True consistency, that of the prudent and the wise, is to act in conformity with circumstances and not to act always the same way under a change of circumstances. *John C. Calhoun*

When people understand that they are constantly monitored, they are more conformist--they are less willing to take up controversial positions--and that kind of mass conformity is incompatible with democracy.

Trevor Paglen

Conformity is the jailer of freedom and the enemy of growth. *John F. Kennedy*

Equality, rightly understood as our founding fathers understood it, leads to liberty and to the emancipation of creative differences; wrongly understood, as it has been so tragically in our time, it leads first to conformity and then to despotism.

Barry Goldwater

In America, through pressure of conformity, there is freedom of choice, but nothing to choose from.

Peter Ustinov

However great his outward conformity, the immigrant is not Americanized unless his interests and affections have become deeply rooted here. And we properly demand of the immigrant even more than this. He must be brought into complete harmony with our ideals and aspirations and cooperate with us for their attainment.

Louis D. Brandeis

To seek understanding before taking action, yet to trust my instincts when action is called for. Never to avoid danger from fear, never to seek out danger for its own sake. Never to conform to fashion from fear of eccentricity, never to be eccentric from fear of conformity.

Steven Brust

Fear, conformity, immorality: these are heavy burdens. They drain us of creative energy. And when we are drained of creative energy, we do not create. We procreate, but we do not create.

David McCallum

Conformity is painful. You know, it's too tight. Conformity leads to rebellion. So a desire for happiness is in direct conflict with a desire for freedom.

Thomas Jane

To Confucius, harmony was consensus, not conformity. It required loyal opposition.

Evan Osnos

So many people live within unhappy circumstances and yet will not take the initiative to change their situation because they are conditioned to a life of security, conformity, and conservation, all of which may appear to give one peace of mind, but in reality, nothing is more damaging to the adventurous spirit.

Christopher McCandless

It's an important point to make that people can't just be invalidated, eradicated, because they don't fit tidily into a box. And more and more, the modern world is all about conformity.

Lindsay Duncan

Group conformity scares the pants off me because it's so often a prelude to cruelty towards anyone who doesn't want to--or can't--join the Big Parade.

Bette Midler

I have spent a great deal of my life being part of minorities. Some of the people I admire the most in the world have had the courage to defend, against wind and tide, minority viewpoints in those frightening times when any disagreement with universal conformity is identified as treason.

Antonio Munoz Molina

Where once Lego offered a whimsical form of escapism into the world of the subconscious, encouraging creativity and imagination, it's transformed into a rigid 'box ticking' discipline where children are encouraged to build by conformity.

Ben Fogle

That man is a creature who needs order yet yearns for change is the creative contradiction at the heart of the laws which structure his conformity and define his deviancy.

Freda Adler

The characteristic human trait is not awareness but conformity, and the characteristic result is religious warfare. Other animals fight for territory or food; but, uniquely in the animal kingdom, human beings fight for their 'beliefs.'

Michael Crichton

The supreme lesson of any education should be to think for yourself and to be yourself; absent this attainment, education creates dangerous, stupefying conformity.

Bryant H. McGill

The hired preachers of all sects, creeds, and religions, never do, and never can, teach any thing but what is in conformity with the opinions of those who pay them.

Frances Wright

My friendships and relationships in the conservative world are not predicated on political correctness and enforced conformity of thought. They are based, instead, on mutual respect, honesty and understanding--concepts many modern liberals should consider revisiting.

Tammy Bruce

When the Internet first came into public use, it was hailed as a liberation from conformity, a floating world ruled by passion, creativity, innovation and freedom of information. When it was hijacked first by advertising and then by commerce, it seemed like it had been fully co-opted and brought into line with human greed and ambition.

Neil Strauss

What sometimes goes on in all sorts of Christian institutions is not formation of people in the character of Christ; it's teaching of outward conformity. You don't get in trouble for not having the character of Christ, but you do if you don't obey the laws. *Dallas Willard*

PREPARATION FOR GROUP REFLECTION **1 min**

Read the questions for reflection, one by one

BREAK **10 min**

Concurrent with SONG: THEIR WAY (written by Bob Blue, performed by Gary Hall)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mu-p-CUSMIA>

GROUP REFLECTION (two rounds) **50 min**

Please take time to express your feelings about conformity to the group

- ◆ When did you first become aware of pressure from your peers to conform to the "norm"? How do you handle this pressure--especially when it just doesn't feel right.
- ◆ Have you been able to find support for just being who you are and not changing? Where do you look for such support?
- ◆ How do you feel about social pressure to become or remain "woke"? Is it pressure to break away from conformity and think for yourself, or pressure to conform to a "new norm"?
- ◆ How has believing in yourself been important in your life? What has been the source of your self-confidence?
- ◆ Which of the quotes especially resonated with you, and why? Surprised you?

For those who read the article by Andrew Fox in the appendix:

- ◆ How has the pandemic affected how you interact with individuals of different cultures, religions, educational levels, and political opinions in all of the various roles you play in your life? Do you see this changing as we look forward to the post-pandemic world? How, and how do you plan to respond?
- ◆ Tell us about your feelings navigating the change from conforming to the "Eisenhowerian" model to today's seeming role reversal, especially regarding political stereotypes?

SESSION FEEDBACK **5 min**

How did this session go for you? What could have gone better for you? Are there any changes to the group format you can think of that would help us fulfill our mission, charter, or camaraderie better?

FUTURE PLANS **5 min**

Who wants to join us? The answers will determine:

How many groups? Each group should have at least 6 members, each member willing to participate, facilitate, and commit to group for 9 months. Each group to determine their own schedule and topics.

If no changes materialize, the single, continuing group needs to determine their schedule and commit for the upcoming year.

Immediate plans for October.

EXTINGUISH CHALICE / CLOSING WORDS

0.5 min

But human beings are not machines, and however powerful the pressure to conform, they sometimes are so moved by what they see as injustice that they dare to declare their independence. In that historical possibility lies hope.
Howard Zinn

