

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
Small Group Ministry Program  
**Encounters With Diversity**  
Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, Oregon, May 2011

CHALICE OR CANDLE LIGHTING OR SOUND A CHIME (2 to 3 minutes for this and silence and opening words)

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPENING WORDS

Numerous are our origins, our paths, and our destinations. And yet, happily, our ways have joined together here today. May our joining be a blessing. May it bring comfort to those who are in pain. May it bring hope to those who despair. May it bring peace to those who tremble in fear. May it bring wisdom and guidance for our journeys. And though this joining may be for just a moment in time, the moment is all we can ever be certain of. May we embrace this, and every instant of our lives. (Adapted from Andrew Pakula)

CHECK-IN (up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person)

TOPIC AND SHARING (up to 70 minutes for readings, questions, a few minutes for reflection and making notes if desired, individual sharing, optional open discussion at the end if the group agrees, with an optional 5 minute break about midway in the session)

READINGS

The majority of us are for free speech when it deals with subjects concerning which we have no intense feelings.

-Edmund B. Chaffee

Also, differences of opinion can be creatively stimulating as well as frustrating.

-Jim Coleman

I think we have to own the fears that we have of each other, and then, in some practical way, some daily way, figure out how to see people differently than the way we were brought up to.

-Alice Walker

With NVC [nonviolent communication] we learn to hear our own deeper needs and those of others. Through its emphasis on deep listening—to ourselves as well as others—NVC helps us discover the depth of our own compassion. This language reveals the awareness that all human beings are only trying to honor universal values and needs, every minute, every day.

-Center for Nonviolent Communication, [www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org)

We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now.

-Martin Luther King, Jr

There are no foreign lands. It is the traveler only who is foreign.

-Robert Louis Stevenson

Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness.

-Mark Twain

Human diversity makes tolerance more than a virtue; it makes it a requirement for survival.

-Rene Dubos

QUESTIONS (Please respond to whichever question or questions you feel moved to answer. It is not necessary to respond to all of the questions. You may also respond to any of the readings that you find to be particularly meaningful.)

1. Please share your experience of encounters with people or places very different from what you were used to (ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, mental health, culture, values, language, geography, climate, etc.). What transformations occurred in you as a result of those encounters?
2. What differences are most difficult for you to tolerate, and why?
3. What differences or diversity do you anticipate we might encounter in our new church location, and what responses might you have to those encounters?

SHARING (up to 6 to 8 minutes each without interruption, depending on the time available, with optional open discussion at the end after all have shared)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (up to 5-10 minutes)

-Confirm next meeting date, time, location, and topic.

-Consider discussing the service project.

-Hand out or send by e-mail the SGM evaluation forms for the facilitator and the participants. The forms are to be completed prior to or during the next, final, session, and turned in at that session.

-Other

LIKES (celebrations, gratitudes, appreciations for needs met) and WISHES (mournings, requests, acknowledgements of needs not met)/CHECK-OUT (a few words or phrases from each who wants to share, up to 5 minutes total)

CLOSING WORDS (2 minutes for words, and closing)

May your mind be open to new learning, may your lips bring truth into the world, may your heart know love and your hands do the work of justice, as you go your way in peace, as you go your way in peace.

EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE OR CANDLE OR SOUND A CHIME (and additional optional closing ritual if agreed to)

(Preparation for the facilitator. Please bring the SGM Facilitator Training Manual, paper and writing implements, the lesson plan, and your calendar/date book.)

Lesson plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry steering committee (Laura Adams; Dick Loescher, chair; Sandy Moses; Leora White) and Rev. Alicia Forsey 2/27/11