

Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR
Small Group Ministry
“Ending and Leave-taking”

Chalice or candle lighting or sound a chime (2 minutes for this and silence and opening words)

Moment of silence

Opening words

We seek the courage and compassion to hear with care the memories and current experiences we share with each other. We wish to be a community of understanding, hope, and support. May we find ways for our stories to enrich our connection and enhance our appreciation of each other.

Check-in (up to 20 to 30 minutes, with 2 to 3 minutes each)

Completion of the evaluation form (up to 20 minutes)

The evaluation form may be sent to group members ahead of time, or distributed at this session.

Topic and sharing (up to 65 minutes for reading, questions, a few minutes for reflection and making notes if desired, individual sharing , and optional discussion at the end, with an optional 5 minute break about midway in the session)

Reading

“I wanted a perfect ending. Now I've learned, the hard way, that some poems don't rhyme, and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next.”

--Gilda Radner

“... we all develop our own typical response to ending things. ... What you bring with you to a transitional situation is the style you have developed for dealing with endings. The product of early experience and late influence, this style is your own way of dealing with external circumstances and with the inner distress they stir up. ... Somewhere along the way, you may also have picked up somebody else's style and copied or adapted it to your situation. ... Everyone finds endings difficult ... However you learned to deal with them, endings are the first phase of transition. The second phase is a time of lostness and emptiness before “life” resumes an intelligible pattern and direction. The third phase is that of beginning anew.”

--William Bridges, from “Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes”, 2004

On Leaf-Taking and Leave-Taking

As frost and wind take leaves from trees,
Stripping them naked and bare
For discontentful Winter;
So also does a goodbye
Leave the parters unclothed
And comfortless for a time.
But, as sure as Spring,
There will be buds
And new comings-together,
With time enough to grow.
--Charles William Conaway

Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened. --Dr. Seuss

Questions

1. What makes it easy or difficult for you to say goodbye in this or other situations in your life? What helps or supports you in letting go when you must: a belief; a faith; a practice; a perspective; past experience; the example of someone you admire; something or someone to look forward to; other?
2. What was a challenging ending or leave-taking you experienced in the past, and how did that transition evolve for you?
3. At the first meeting of this SGM group you shared what you hoped to get from and to give to this group experience. To what extent have those hopes been realized?
4. Please share anything else you want others in the group to know at this last scheduled meeting of this particular SGM group.

Sharing (up to 6 to 8 minutes each, depending on the time available, with time at the end for comment and discussion if the group wishes)

Likes and wishes/check-out (up to 2 minutes total)

Closing words (2 minutes for words and closing)

We are changed, you and I. Just as before, countless times in cycles that never quite repeat. We are changed. But this time it is different. For we have shared the sacred gift of knowing one another, of trusting one another. And so I say to you: go forth boldly; you are not alone; you carry with you a part of all of us. And so I say to you: go forth, in peace.

--adapted from *Andrew C. Backus*

Extinguish the chalice or candle or sound a chime (and optional closing ritual)

(Preparation for facilitator: bring the SGM facilitator training manual, paper and writing implements, extra copies of the evaluation form, the lesson plan, and your date book.)

Lesson plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee curriculum subcommittee (Rev. Steve Landale, Dick Loescher, Leora White) 4-16-09