

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry Program
Facing Challenges
Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR, February 2015

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

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPENING WORDS

We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted...when we are in trouble and afraid...when we are in despair, in temptation, and need to be recalled to our best selves again. We need one another when we would accomplish some great purpose, and cannot do it alone...in the hour of our successes, when we look for someone to share our triumphs...in the hour of our defeat when with encouragement we might endure and stand again. We need one another when we come to die, and would have gentle hands prepare us for the journey. All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us.

-George Odell

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 only certainty is that life is uncertain...Expectations create an attachment, a yearning, a desire, a hope for something in the future to turn out a certain way...they keep us from noticing and playing with exciting possibilities that always surround us.

-Susan Jeffers, Ph.D.

According to Darwin's *Origin of Species*, it is not the most intellectual...not the strongest...but the species that survives is the one that is able best to adapt and adjust to the changing environment in which it finds itself.

-Leon C. Megginson

To be grateful for the good things that happen in our lives is easy, but to be grateful for all of our lives—the good as well as the bad, the moments of joy as well as the moments of sorrow, the successes as well as the failures, the rewards as well as the rejections—that requires hard spiritual work.

-Henri Nouwen

Reality is the name we give to our disappointments.

-Mason Cooley

If we are not allowed to deal with small problems, we will be destroyed by slightly larger ones. When we come to understand this, we live our lives not avoiding problems, but welcoming them as challenges that will strengthen us so that we can be victorious in the future.

-Jim Stovall

...checklist of factors that bolster resilience...Having a spiritual life. Taking care of yourself physically. Having family/friend/community networks. Investing energy on inner self. Asking for help.

-Christine Robinson & Alicia Hawkins, Soul to Soul

QUESTIONS and REQUESTS (Please respond to any of the questions, requests, and readings you feel moved by. It is not necessary to respond to all of them.)

1. Tell about some challenges you have had and their meaning for your life.
2. What people, groups, events, practices, and beliefs have been most helpful to you in facing challenging situations?
3. What would you want to teach a child about challenges, hard times, and uncertainties of life, and how to cope with them?

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). Alternatively, this agenda item can be done after the check-in, if the group decides to do that.

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

-Consider discussing the service project.

-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)

As we leave this circle, may we carry one another in our hearts. And may the fellowship that we have shared expand our hearts, strengthen our resolve and carry us forward into tomorrow.

-From UU Community Church, Augusta, Maine

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.)

Session plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry steering committee (Lyn Fischrup; Bonnie Koenig; Al Landy; Dick Loescher, chair).

February 6, 2015