

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Websites

**Finding Balance, Living with Polarities Series**

**Freedom and Accountability**

Small Group Ministry Session Plan, Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, Oregon, March 2010

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

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPENING WORDS

Let us find time to settle, to sit quietly, or walk gently, letting distractions go, refusing busy thoughts and uninvited images, to listen for the deeper Self that lives below the clamor of voices crying for our attention. Let us find time and places to enter the nourishing quiet that lies in the center of us all.

(Adapted from Marv Hiles)

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

TOPIC AND SHARING (up to 70 minutes for reading, questions, and sharing with optional 5 minute break about midway in the session)

READINGS

A funny notion, feeling whole. In rare moments of deep play, we can lay aside our sense of self, shed time's continuum, ignore gain, and sit quietly in the absolute present, watching the world's ordinary miracles. No mind or heart hobbles. No analyzing or explaining. No questing for logic. No promises. No goals. No relationships. No worry.

(By Dianne Ackerman from "Deep Play")

Because of our tradition and self-image as a "faith of the free", some people who come to our churches, calling themselves "free spirits", are hell-bent on fighting the evil of an organized anything....Unitarian Universalists have come to trust and place great value on freedom and individualism. What we tend to forget is that they emphasized freedom in order to liberate themselves from bondage. Today our problem is not bondage, but bondlessness. Most of us are already free. We don't need more freedom. We need the resolve to employ the freedom we have responsibly. We need to invest a little of our precious freedom, and bond ourselves to others in redemptive community.

(By F. Forrester Church in "Our Chosen Faith")

The worst enemy of life, freedom, and the common decencies is total anarchy; their second worst enemy is total efficiency.

(By Aldous Huxley)

Everyone sooner or later sits down to a banquet of consequences.

(By Robert Louis Stevenson)

We are committed only to searching for the truth, but with considerable apprehension lest we find some, only to discover that finding a truth compromises our freedom by demanding our allegiance to it.

(By Gordon McKeeman, retired UU minister and former President of Starr King School for the Ministry)

It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable. (By Moliere)

**QUESTIONS** (Please respond to whichever question or questions you feel moved to answer. It is not necessary to respond to all of the questions.)

1. Share about an experience when you exercised your freedom and found it liberating, and others appreciated what you did.
2. Describe an experience that someone considered to be an expression of freedom, and others considered to be anarchy or license and did not like. What led to those different perceptions, and what did you learn?
3. Describe a time when you or someone else refrained from doing something you or they really wanted to because of concerns about accountability. What are your thoughts and feelings about the value and liability of accountability in that, or other situations in your life?
4. Has there been a time in your life when freedom felt like a burden, when you might have welcomed some accountability to give your life a sense of order or meaning? Please share.
5. Describe a time when your church community helped you integrate freedom and accountability in a life giving way.

**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)

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS** (service project, future meeting dates and topics, etc.) (Up to 15 minutes)

- Confirm next meeting date, time, location, and topic.
- Review of the covenant.
- Feedback about the facilitation and the SGM program so far.
- Consider discussing the service project.

**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)

That which is worthy of doing, create with your hands.  
That which is worthy of repeating, speak with a clear voice.  
That which is worthy of remembering, hold in your heart.  
And that which is worthy of living, go and live it now.  
(By Steve J. Crump)

**EXTINGUISH THE CANDLE OR SOUND THE 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 date book.)

Lesson plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee curriculum subcommittee  
(Rev. Stephen A. Ames, Dick Loescher, Leora White) 2/10/10