

**Chalice Or Candle Lighting Or Sound A Chime** (3 to 5 minutes for this and silence and opening words)

### **Moment of Silence**

### **Opening Words**

Come into this circle of community. Come into this sacred space.

Be not tentative. Bring your whole self!

Bring the joy that makes your heart sing.

Bring your kindness and your compassion.

Bring also your sorrow, your pain.

Bring your brokenness and your disappointments.

In the spirit of love and mystery; may we recognize the unique spark that resides within each of us.

May we know the joy of wholeness.

May we know the joy of being together.

(Adapted from Andrew Pakula)

**Check-In** (up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person, without interruption: name, how long associated with UUCE and Unitarian Universalism, prior SGM experience, and how you are feeling at present)

### **Welcome and Review of the SGM Program** (25 minutes)

- Structure and format of the groups (as described in the SGM pamphlet and training manual).
- Hand out and review the SGM Covenant of Right Relationship with Why a Covenant on the back.  
The background of this covenant is that it was developed by the SGM steering committee in 2007, and has been updated recently. It is based on our experience with the SGM program here, information from other churches and SGM workshops, the UU SGM network, and other resources. Consider having each person read a line of the covenant and then ask for questions and comment at the end of each section. In particular, it is important to discuss confidentiality and what that means to people and to get agreement about this.
- Mention of the service project.

**Break**-optional (5 min)

**Topic and Sharing** (45 to 50 minutes including reading, questions and sharing)

### **Reading**

Finding Balance, Living with Polarities

Many people and religious traditions have written and taught that life involves many polarities and paradoxes, both within an individual and within groups. These polarities are said to be differences and preferences to be recognized and managed, rather than problems to be solved.

Each end of the polarity has its own advantages and value, as well as disadvantages and liabilities. In our sessions we will be exploring some of the polarities that exist and sharing some

of our attempts at finding balance living with polarities, embracing “both and”, rather than “either/or”.

Examples of polarities include: individuality and community; tradition and innovation; faith and doubt; and freedom and accountability.

(Written by the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee curriculum subcommittee [Rev. Stephen A. Ames, Dick Loescher, Leora White] 10/24/09)

**Questions** (Give a piece of paper and writing implement to each person and allow a few minutes for people to make notes before sharing)

1. What would you like to share about yourself with the group, including if you wish, where you are on your life journey and what is particularly important to you at this time?
2. If you wish, please share what polarities are particularly prominent for you at this time?
3. What do you want to get from being in the group and what do you want to offer to the group?

**Sharing** (up to 3 to 6 minutes each, without interruption, depending on how many are present and the time available) If the group wishes to, there can be discussion at the end after all have shared.

**Administrative Matters** (service project, future meeting dates and topics, etc.) (5-10 minutes)

- Confirm future meeting dates, time, and place.
- Ask people if they want the lesson plans for subsequent sessions, if available, sent to them ahead of time (electronically or by paper mail) for reflection. Ask those with e-mail access if they can open attachments or if they need all information sent in the body of the e-mail.
- Ask people to review the contact list for any corrections needed. If agreeable to group members arrange to provide a list of group members and their contact information to each person by handing out a list and/or sending it by e-mail or paper mail (today or at the next session).

**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 this and closing listed below)

We give thanks for the gifts of each other’s sharing. We say “Thank you for risking your story. Thank you for creating a place of safety. Thank you for listening with appreciation as we deepen our knowing of one another through the weeks to come.”

(Adapted from “Gatherings”, by Tony Bushman and Bill Hamilton-Holway)

**Extinguish the Chalice or Candle or Sound a Chime** (option of some additional closing ritual per group agreement such as holding hands, group hug, bow to each other, hum or sing, or other ritual)

(Preparation for the facilitator. Please bring: the SGM Facilitator Training Manual; a copy of the SGM pamphlet; copies of the SGM Covenant of Right Relationship with Why a Covenant on the back to give to each person; blank paper and writing implements for each person; a copy of the list of group members with contact information; and your date book.)

(Lesson plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee curriculum subcommittee [Rev. Stephen A. Ames, Dick Loescher, Leora White] 10/24/09)