

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY Plan for Facilitators
Grace
Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA
By Kathleen McTigue & Stephan Papa, February 2004

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting: From *Oblique Prayers* by Denise Levertov

“As swimmers dare
to lie face to sky
and water bears them,
as hawks rest upon air
and air sustains them,
so would I learn to attain
freefall, and float
into Creator Spirit’s
deep embrace,
knowing no effort earns
that all surrounding grace.”

Reflection/Personal Sharing/Prayer (approximately 30 minutes)

(The facilitator should briefly remind the group of confidentiality/anonymity, that this is not the time for cross conversation, etc.)

Focus Readings: From “The Tides of Spring” by Waldemar Argow

“The oceans of this world are pushed and pulled by tides the moon controls. Out of the vastness of the deep they roll and all the seas give way before them. But there are tides that sweep the land as well. A flaming sun draws them north and upward the south until all the land gives way before them and the earth is drenched with the bright green waters of spring. There are tides of the sea and tides of the land, and to know them and to feel them is to find peace that passes understanding. For the tides move to a rhythm and an order and a harmony the soul of man *sic* is hungry for. Stand out upon a moonlit night and watch the seas of spring around you—and feel the tide come in.”

From *Traveling Mercies* by Anne Lamott

“I know more about grace than I did two weeks ago. For instance, that Auden was right when he wrote, ‘I know nothing, except what everyone knows—if there when Grace dances, I should dance.’ ... I understand that Auden meant grace in the theological sense, meant it as the force that infuses our lives and keeps letting us off the hook. It is unearned love—the love that goes before, that greets us on the way. It’s the help you receive when you have no bright ideas left,

when you are empty and desperate and have discovered that your best thinking and most charming charm have failed you. Grace is the light or electricity or juice or breeze that takes you from that isolated place and puts you with others who are as startled and embarrassed and eventually grateful as you are to be there.... I do not at all understand the mystery of grace—only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us. It can be received gladly or grudgingly, in big gulps or in tiny tastes, like a deer at the salt.”

Focus Questions:

Share a life experience that could be described as a grace-filled moment—using one of Anne Lamott’s definitions of grace or your own definition.

What experiences lead you to be thankful for life?

What experiences of letting go, letting be, being open, just trusting, have you had?

What is grace?

What helps you recognize and accept it?

Checkout/Likes and Wishes

(This is the time for facilitators to ask participants what they liked about this meeting and what they might wish for future meetings. This is also the time for any discussion of logistics.)

Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice: From Phillp Booth

“Lie back, daughter, let your head
be tipped back in the cup of my hand.
Gently, and I will hold you. Spread
your arms wide, lie out on the stream
and look high at the gulls. A dead-
man’s float is face down. You will dive
and swim soon enough where this tidewater
ebbs to the sea. Daughter, believe
me, where you tire on the long thrash
to your island, lie up, and survive.
As you float now, where I held you
and let go, remember when fear
cramps your heart what I told you:
lie gently and wide to the light-year
stars, lie back, and the sea will hold you.”