

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
**“Impermanence”**  
Covenant Group Curriculum, River of Grass Unitarian Universalist  
Congregation, Davie, FL

**Opening Meditation/Music/Silence/Chalice Lighting** (whichever one(s) you choose to do)

**Opening Words:**

““We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of love, of relationships. We leap at the flow of the tide and resist in terror its ebb. We are afraid it will never return. We insist on permanency, on duration, on continuity; when the only continuity possible, in life as in love, is in growth in fluidity -- in freedom....How can one learn to take {not just the crest, but also} the trough of the wave? It is easier to understand here on the beach, where the breathlessly still ebb tide reveals another life below the level which mortals usually reach. In this crystalline moment of suspense, one has a sudden revelation of the secret kingdom at the bottom of the sea... So, beautiful is the still hour of the sea's withdrawal, as beautiful as the sea's return.”

- *Anne Morrow Lindbergh*

**Check-in/Sharing**

**Topic/Readings:**

“Nothing remains the same for two consecutive moments. Heraclitus said we can never bathe twice in the same river. Confucius, while looking at a stream, said, "It is always flowing, day and night." The Buddha implored us not just to talk about impermanence, but to use it as an instrument to help us penetrate deeply into reality and obtain liberating insight. We may be tempted to say that because things are impermanent, there is suffering. But the Buddha encouraged us to look again. Without impermanence, life is not possible. How can we transform our suffering if things are not impermanent? How can our daughter grow up into a beautiful young lady? How can the situation in the world improve? We need impermanence for social justice and for hope.

If you suffer, it is not because things are impermanent. It is because you believe things are permanent. When a flower dies, you don't suffer much, because you understand that flowers are impermanent. But you cannot accept the impermanence of your beloved one, and you suffer deeply when she passes away.

If you look deeply into impermanence, you will do your best to make her happy right now. Aware of impermanence, you become positive, loving and wise. Impermanence is good news. Without impermanence, nothing would be possible. With impermanence, every door is open for change. Impermanence is an instrument for our liberation.”

- *Thich Nhat Hahn*

**Facilitator:** Ask people to do as the reading instructed, to go beyond merely talking about impermanence, to actually seeing how impermanence is woven into their perspectives upon life, upon love, upon relationships, upon time itself. How has impermanence been a hindrance to them to them, how has it been a help? Even if permanence is not possible, and all life is change, what about the prospects for all of life being in relationship and continuity?

### Likes and Wishes/Feedback

### Closing Words:

**Facilitator:** Please read the closing as a meditation, asking folks to be quiet and stable and focus on their breathing slowly and easily. Read the passage below with patience and ease aloud to your group.

Breathe and you know that you are alive.  
Breathe and you know that all is helping you.  
Breathe and you know that you are the world.  
Breathe and you know that the flower is breathing too.  
Breathe for yourself and you breathe for the world.  
Breathe in compassion and breathe out joy.

Breathe and be one with the air that you breathe.  
Breathe and be one with the river that flows.  
Breathe and be one with the earth that you tread.  
Breathe and be one with the fire that glows.  
Breathe and you break the thought of birth and death.  
Breathe and you see that impermanence is life.

Breathe for your joy to be steady and calm.  
Breathe for your sorrow to flow away.  
Breathe to renew every cell in your blood.  
Breathe to renew the depths of consciousness.  
Breathe and you dwell in the here and now.  
Breathe and all you touch is new and real.

*- Annabel Laity*

Amen. May you live in blessing.