

Individuality and Community -

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

Chalice or candle lighting or sound a chime (2 minutes for this and silence and opening words)

Moment of silence

Opening words

As surely as we belong to the universe we belong together.

We join here to transcend the isolated self, to reconnect, to know ourselves to be at home, here on earth, under the stars, linked with each other.

(By Rev. Margaret A. Keip)

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

We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been — a place half-remembered and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free.

(By Starhawk)

Through the lens of the spirit I can see, though imperfectly, that we are all one in creation...in the deepest sense, my individuality is an illusion.

(By Bruce Birchard)

If a man does not keep pace with his companion, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer.

(by Henry David Thoreau)

It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.

(By Ralph Waldo Emerson)

The only journey is the journey within.

(By Rainer Maria Rilke.)

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. What experiences are you currently having regarding the polarity between individuality (and the need for autonomy and solitude), and community (and the need for connection with others)?
2. How has your need for individuality and for community changed at different times in your life?

3. Talk about a time when being part of a community was helpful in discovering your individuality, and when it was limiting.
4. Where do you find the most fulfillment in experiencing your individuality, and where do you find the most fulfillment in your connection with others?
5. What do you find most challenging about your individuality, and about being in community?

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 5 to 10 minutes)

- Confirm next meeting date, time, location, and topic.
- Hand out the contact list of group members, if agreed to and if not already done.
- 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 for words, and closing)

Our time in this place may have ended, but our connection to each other and this community remains. Together may we walk the path of justice, speak words of love, live the selfless deed, tread gently upon the earth, and fill the world with compassion.

(By Kathy A. Huff)

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, copies of the group contact list, 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