

What is a leader?

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Susquehanna Valley
First Monday Covenant Group
1st Monday, May 2018, 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Welcoming Chimes, Chalice Lighting, and Opening Words (2 minutes):

We light the flame in the chalice to remind ourselves that we are part of a beloved community where we are encouraged to bring our authentic selves to join each other in sharing from our hearts and listening with our hearts. May it be so.

The evidence is all around us. It is in our daily lives – in our schools, businesses, social groups, religious organizations, and public agencies. It is in our local community, in our more distant state government and national government, and on the international scene. Leadership makes the difference. Leadership can be good, as when your sales manager calls his department together to point out that last month's quotas have been met but that a new competitor is starting to make inroads. It can be better, as when a political party leader sums up what she and her team feel will be needed to win an election. It can be best, as when a community activist senses and articulates the community's pressing needs and mobilizes the community into effective action. – Bernard M. Bass

Check-In and Check-Back (25 minutes):

This structured process (and spiritual discipline) of deep listening and uninterrupted speaking offers participants the opportunity to know and connect with each other more deeply and personally than their busy lives and casual conversations usually allow.

- Check-In (up to 3 minutes, no interruptions)

Free yourself to be fully present with the group by noting any features of your inner or outer life that seem especially important for you today. Also indicate if you are open to comment during check-back.

- Check-Back (up to 2 minutes, no interruptions)

After everyone has finished checking in, briefly comment, if invited to do so, on any of the check-in statements that you have just heard.

Topic: "Leadership" (40 minutes)

Topic Readings:

Reference to leadership is apparent throughout classical Western and Eastern writings with a widespread belief that leadership is vital for effective organizational and societal functioning. Nonetheless, leadership is often easy to identify in practice, but it is difficult to define precisely. –David V. Day

The reputation of organizational leaders depends on their morality as persons and as managers and executives. They may be moral in beliefs and ethical in behavior; they may be amoral in beliefs and neutral in ethical behavior; or they may be immoral in beliefs and unethical in behavior. – Trevino, Hartman, & Brown

Leadership competence is the capacity to mobilize one-self and others to serve and work collaboratively. – Susan Komives

The best leaders are the best learners. – James Kouzes

Leadership is not about a title or a designation. It's about impact, influence and inspiration. Impact involves getting results, influence is about spreading the passion you have for your work, and you have to inspire team-mates and customers. – Robin S. Sharma

I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion. – Alexander the Great

Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership. –Colin Powell

Leadership is a choice, not a position. – Stephen Covey

The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers. – Ralph Nader

The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership. – Harvey S. Firestone

No man will make a great leader who wants to do it all himself or get all the credit for doing it. – Andrew Carnegie

Leaders who do not look after the interests of their followers and other organizational stakeholders are not only unethical but also ineffective. – Ciulla

I know of no single formula for success. But over the years I have observed that some attributes of leadership are universal and are often about finding ways of encouraging people to combine their efforts, their talents, their insights, their enthusiasm and their inspiration to work together. –Queen Elizabeth II

Men make history and not the other way around. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better. – Harry S. Truman

Deep Listening

One goal of deep listening is to create inviting space for another to share deeply from her/his heart, while we listen with an open heart that is willing to be touched not only by the words that are spoken but also by the feelings that are shared. Please open your heart to listen deeply as each person speaks.

The Topic Discussion is more informally structured. Participants are now free to respond to the topic, limiting themselves only by:

- Keeping to the topic;
- Speaking from personal experience (using “I” rather than “we”, “one” or “you” statements) and sharing only what we are comfortable sharing.
- Valuing the experience of others by sharing the time available and not debating or arguing.

- First response: Each group member will register their initial thoughts—in random order, but with no feedback during this segment. Each person has about three (3) minutes to share.
- Then: Cross-conversation. IF one person dominates, gently remind that person that we need to allow time for every group member to speak.
- As time allows, conclude discussion with request for final statements/last thoughts on this topic—in random order, but with no feedback.

If helpful, choose one of these questions to frame your sharing.

Topic Focus Questions

- List and justify three characteristics of good leaders. And, bad leaders?
- Are you a leader? Why or why not?
- To what extent do you believe leadership is a rare and unusual talent? Why?
- What is the one value for which a good leader should wish to be remembered in their family, their community, their work, and their life? Why?
- In what ways might you use the strengths and talents you developed when you faced your crucibles in the past to demonstrate leadership with today's or tomorrow's challenges?
- Are good leaders born or nurtured? Do they present spontaneously, or are they many years in the making?
- What is a "leader?" Does being a leader require a position? Why or why not?
- What is the role of competence in leadership? What types of competence are necessary?
- What are the differences between a good civic leader and a good business leader? Why do such differences exist? Is there balance or tension between the two?

Likes and Wishes (10 minutes): What did I enjoy about this session? What would I like to see done differently?

Extinguishing the Chalice and Closing Words:

The best of all rulers is but a shadowy presence to his subjects.

Next comes the ruler they love and praise;

Next comes one they fear;

Next comes one with whom they may take liberties...

Hesitant, the best does not utter words lightly.

When his task is accomplished and his work done,

They people all say, "it happened to us naturally." -- Lao-tzu (Confucian scholar) in *Tao Te Ching*

As we leave this place and this company, may the fellowship of this circle carry us forward, remind us of what we hold sacred, and encourage us every hour until we meet again.

Additional quote options:

Leaders can have an important moral effect on those they lead. The leader may simply ask, “What is the right thing to do?” The leader may direct or request more systematic deliberation on what is the right thing to do, to add confidence in the answer. – Gresham-Pophal

Authentic leaders are true to themselves and to others. Leaders may deceive others by not being true to themselves; they ignore Polonius’ admonition to Laertes in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, “This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.” -- Clemens & Mayer

Supposedly, “The path to profits is not paved with caring concern but with Darwinian cleverness.” Nevertheless, altruism has a place in the management of our organizations. There are leadership styles, such as “servant leadership,” that call for extreme altruism. – Margolis

Conscientiousness tends to predict better job performance and good organizational citizens behavior. It correlates with fewer acts of delinquency such as stealing. – Barrick, Mount, & Strauss

Courage is a mix of instant or longer emotional and cognitive states related to taking action in the face of vulnerability, risks, dangers, potential losses, and consequences to oneself. Moral courage is the essence of leadership. – Gal

Compassion, if authentic, reflects a genuine empathic concern for others’ pain. It is a virtue of benefit to individuals, organizations, and society. – Wuthnow

A sense of duty is a virtue expected of leaders. They need to avoid being self-serving. – Piaker

We now know that apes, like humans, have leadership and followership relationships, but we have little evidence that they share the values professed by Western moral philosophers! -- James MacGregor Burns

Value systems splinter under the pressure of heightened expectations and demands. Followers themselves become leaders throughout the society and act as both consolidating and divisive forces. – James MacGregor Burns

The clues to the mystery of leadership lie in a potent equation: embattled values grounded in real wants, invigorated by conflict, empower leaders and activated followers to fashion deep and comprehensive change in the lives of people. – James MacGregor Burns

Credibility is the foundation of leadership. – James Kouzes

Leaders believe they can make a difference. – Barry Posner

Focusing on the future sets leaders apart. – James Kouzes

Leadership is an affair of the heart. – Barry Posner

A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way. – John C. Maxwell

Some observers see spirituality as the “hottest new management theory,” and opportunity to exploit religious language in service of organizational performance. – Wallace

Leaders are more likely to fail because of lack of character than lack of competence. – General Norman Schwarzkopf

A virtue of leadership is being just and fair. What may be ethical and fair in the short run may be unethical and unfair in the long run. – Messick & Bazerman

Wisdom allows the leader to activate bodies of factual and strategic knowledge simultaneously to address practical and uncertain aspects of life. It promotes understanding of what is true and right and guides effective rational and moral judgment. – Jeannot

Women leaders are more participative and democratic, men more directive and autocratic. – Eagley & Johnson

A leader may not be a positional leader, but a participant engaging in the leadership process as a group member. – Wendy Wagner

Leadership is the X factor in historic causation. – James MacGregor Burns

At best, charisma is a confusing and undemocratic form of leadership. At worst, it is a type of tyranny. [It is] an exotic or lopsided form of transforming leadership. – David Nadler & Michael Tushman.

You either lead by example or you don't lead at all. – Barry Posner

A leader is a dealer in hope. – Napoleon Bonaparte

A man who wants to lead the orchestra must turn his back on the crowd. – Max Lucado

Additional focus question options:

- What are the differences between “lead,” “leader,” and “leadership?”
- To what extent do people agree across the region, nation, or globe on the definition of a good leader?
- What is the proper balance of “self” and “other” in being a good leader?