

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry Program
Lives of Meaning, Reverence, and Depth
Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR, November 2015

CHALICE OR CANDLE LIGHTING OR SOUND A CHIME (2 to 3 minutes for this and silence and opening words)
MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPENING WORDS

Let us listen...Just for a while let us silence our minds and open our hearts. Just for a while let us listen from within not to gain knowledge or formulate questions, rather to chance upon sacred bonds and profound wisdom. Let us not rouse the intellect, but embrace the spirit. If thoughts cloud the brain may we let them pass. If replies tingle on the tongue let us breathe them away silently, return to them later. But here...in this precious time of sharing let us listen...let the words wash over us and seep into a still quiet pool. Let us listen.

-Adapted from Mary-Elizabeth Cotton, Fellowship Administrator, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Peninsula (Newport News, Virginia)

CHECK-IN (up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person)

TOPIC AND SHARING (up to 70 minutes for readings, questions and requests, a few minutes for reflection and making notes if desired, individual sharing, optional open discussion at the end if the group agrees, with an optional 5 minute break about midway in the session)

READINGS

The purpose of life is to stay alive. Watch any animal in nature—all it tries to do is stay alive. It doesn't care about beliefs or philosophy. Whenever an animal's behavior put it out of touch with the realities of its existence, it becomes extinct.

-Michael Crichton, American author and physician, from *Congo*

The requirements for our evolution have changed. Survival is no longer sufficient. Our evolution now requires us to develop spiritually—to become emotionally aware and make responsible choices. It requires us to align ourselves with the value of the soul—harmony, cooperation, sharing, and reverence for life.

-Gary Zukav, American spiritual teacher and author

I don't know the meaning of life. I don't know why we are here. I think life is full of anxieties and fears and tears. It has a lot of grief in it, and it can be very grim. And I do not want to be the one who tries to tell somebody else what life is all about. To me it's a complete mystery.

-Charles M. Schulz, American cartoonist in *Charles M. Schulz: Conversations*

Life is without meaning. You bring the meaning to it. The meaning of life is whatever you ascribe it to be. Being alive is the meaning.

-Joseph Campbell, American mythologist

To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end of life.

-Robert Louis Stevenson, Scottish author in *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*

I believe the capacity to care is the thing which gives life its deepest significance.

-Pablo Casals, Spanish cellist

Our prime purpose in this life is to help others. And if you can't help them, at least don't hurt them.

-The Dalai Lama, Tibetan Spiritual Leader

The problem to be faced is: how to combine loyalty to one's own tradition with reverence for different traditions.

-Abraham Joshua Heschel, Polish-born American rabbi

By having reverence for life, we enter into a spiritual relation with the world. By practicing reverence for life we become good, deep, and alive.

-Albert Schweitzer, German/French philosopher, theologian, and physician

QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS (Please respond to any of the questions, requests, and readings you feel moved by. It is not necessary to respond to all of them.)

1. What or who gives a sense of meaning, reverence, and depth in your life?
2. What interferes with having a sense of meaning, reverence, and depth in your life?
3. In what ways do you contribute to a sense of meaning, reverence, and depth in the lives of others?

SHARING (up to 6 to 8 minutes each without interruption, depending on the time available, with optional open discussion at the end after all have shared)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (up to 5-10 minutes). Alternatively, this agenda item can be done after the check-in, if the group decides to do that.

-Confirm next meeting date, time, location, and topic.

-Consider discussing the service project.

-Other

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 person who wants to share, up to 5 minutes total)

CLOSING WORDS (2 minutes for words, and closing)

And now we take our leave. Before we gather here again, may each of us bring happiness to another's life; may we each be surprised by the gifts that surround us; may we each be enlivened by constant curiosity; and may we remain together in spirit 'til the hour we meet again.

-Rev. Barbara Cheatham, Unitarian Universalist minister

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 binder; paper and writing implements; the session plan; a candle or chime; a timekeeping device; and your calendar/date book.)

Session plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry steering committee 2015-2016 (Bonnie Koenig; Dick Loescher, chair; Connie Newman).

November 23, 2015