

Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene
Small Group Ministry Program
Meaning and Purpose in Life

Chalice or candle lighting or sound a chime (2 to 3 minutes for this and silence and opening words)

Moment of silence

Opening words

Excerpt from The Summer Day by Mary Oliver

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
With your one wild and precious life?

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)

Reading

In a recent issue of *Utne Magazine* (Jan.-Feb. 2006), Nina Utne asked Robert Gass, a teacher and spiritual activist, "How do we know what to do? How do we know what matters?" He replied, We don't! But still we choose to engage. Each of us is here for a purpose. Not an idea, not something we invent, but something we discover. If each of us answers this unique call, somehow it will all get done. For some of us, our purpose might express itself through standing up against racism or sexism. For others, it's about caring for a family. We may live our purpose through community service, through art, or through business. As one who trains activists, I believe my job is to help each person find a true and powerful expression of that authentic purpose.

Questions

- What activities and roles in your life are associated with a sense of meaning, purpose, and satisfaction for you? Why?
- Are there parts of your life that do not seem to have meaning or purpose and lack satisfaction? Why? Would reframing something you do out of a sense of obligation, "I have to _____", to be viewed in the context of "I choose to _____ because I want _____" lead to any change in how you feel about what you are doing? Are there other ways you are able to find meaning in mundane activities?
- Do you think that there is a common purpose and meaning to life that applies to all people, or not, and what has influenced your ideas and opinions about that? How, if at all, have religious beliefs, current or in the past, influenced your views about the meaning and purpose of your existence?

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, thank you, appreciation for needs met) **and wishes** (mournings, requests, please, acknowledgement 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)

“As our time together comes to a close, we give thanks for one another, for the chance to share our lives, and to renew our spirits in the company of friends. May we go forth enriched by our gathering, committed to living life fully, to loving life with more passion, and to supporting one another.” From “Gatherings” by Tony Bushman and Bill Hamilton-Holway.

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, a piece of paper and writing implement, 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. Steve Landale, Dick Loescher, Leora White) 11/22/08