

## Circle Ministry Session Plan

### *Money*

Rev. Jan Carlsson-Bull for Circle Ministry at First Parish UU Cohasset, MA

**Note: See the Circle Ministry Session Sequence for process guidelines.**

**Gathering, Welcoming (2 minutes)**

**Chalice lighting (1 minute)**

**Opening reading (1 minute)**

The author of *Money and Class in America* and former editor of Harper's Magazine, Lewis Henry Lapham, claims that

“Money is like fire, an element as little troubled by moralizing as earth, air, and water. [We] can employ it as a tool, or...dance around it as if it were the incarnation of a god. Money votes socialist or monarchist, finds a profit in pornography or translations from the Bible, commissions Rembrandt and underwrites the technology of Auschwitz. It acquires its meaning from the uses to which it is put.”

**Check-in/Sharing (3-4 minutes@ - 30-40 minutes)**

**Discussion (60 minutes)**

[See Circle Ministry Session Sequence as a reminder of the structure of this segment.]

First response

Cross-conversation

Concluding statements

**Topic: Money**

While Henry Lewis Lapham approaches money as value-neutral, we know that money is the stuff of wealth and poverty, an indicator of well-being for an individual or a nation, a common topic for domestic discord, and a term that in many churches carries discomfort, embarrassment, and avoidance. It may be value neutral, but we are rarely neutral about the topic of money.

Give yourselves a few moments of silence to think about two questions to help us explore our topic. The first question has two parts:

1. First, how was money dealt with in your family of origin? For example, were money issues resolved successfully or did conflicts over money become never-ending sources of tension and possibly worse?

Second, how do you think your early experiences with money affect your understanding of money today? How does your current sense of money mirror or perhaps differ sharply from how money was dealt with in your family growing up?

2. Last year Michael Durall was here at First Parish UU as a guest minister. His topic was “Churches with Souls.” Stewardship is a factor. “Stewardship,” he says, “involves the use of money in our lives overall: how much we believe God has blessed our lives, how much we earn, how much we save, what we buy with the money we have, and how we use all our resources to create a better world.” Do you agree? Why or why not?

[You may want to proceed in two phases, beginning with the first question and continuing into the second. It is important to get to this second question to bring the topic of money full circle from personal to familial to how we engage with the spiritual practice of fiscal stewardship. You may want to edit the questions, but don't dilute the power of the topic in doing so!]

For our concluding thoughts: How does money free you to be or hinder you from being the person you want to be?

### **Feedback (15 minutes)**

Thank the group.... Ask what they liked and what variations they would hope for.

Explain that for the next session, we'll consider the topic "God."

Note that the session plan for this gathering is available for group members as we leave.

### **Closing (1 minute)**

As Unitarian Universalist minister Virginia Knowles sees it, "Commitment, creativity, energy, caring, and money together determine the spiritual life of a church."

## **Circle Ministry Session Sequence for Facilitators**

### **First Parish Unitarian Universalist – Cohasset**

The suggested sequence and time allocations spelled out below will help you who facilitate our Circle Ministry sessions to ensure that every participant will have a voice over the two-hour timeframe that comprises a Circle Ministry session.

### **Gathering, Welcoming (5 minutes)**

During the **first meeting** of your group, you might want to offer clarification on questions that people have raised:

**How long do the groups meet?** We're asking that each of the initial groups commit to meeting at least through May. At that time or before, you can each decide whether you want to continue in this group, move to another group, or not continue.

**Why a designated facilitator and a co-facilitator?** As similar groups have met in other congregations, facilitators provide assurance that each person has a voice, that we stay on topic, and that we sustain respectful dialogue. Even experiences at First Parish have taught us that groups without designated facilitators tend to fray. There are exceptions; but this is the general learning. The structure provided by facilitators is ultimately satisfying for everyone.

**Introduce your co-facilitator.** Clarify that this person will step in if you can't be there, and if additional congregants want to join groups and there aren't enough open spaces, s/he stands ready to be the lead facilitator for this new group.

#### **Where will we meet regularly?**

This first meeting is at [facilitator or co-facilitator]'s home. For our subsequent sessions, we're asking that one of you volunteer to be a home host. That's all you have to do! Don't clean your house for us. Don't prepare refreshments. Just open your door and welcome us in. By the end of this evening's session, I hope we'll have a home host.

**How can we ensure respectful dialogue and the structure that was introduced about Circle Ministry?** Our focus next week will be a behavioral covenant. I'll provide a basic covenant, and we'll go from there.

You'll continue to have questions. Toward the end of each session there will be a time to raise them.

### **Chalice lighting (1-2 minutes)**

### **Check-in/Sharing (2-3 minutes@ - 20-30 minutes)**

Ask each person to share **what's on their mind and heart**. You may wish to have a timekeeper to gently remind anyone who moves beyond the allotted check-in time that their sharing is valued and we need to ensure a voice for everyone. If the speaker persists, ask her/him firmly and respectfully to conclude. IF as the sessions unfold, someone arrives who has had a particularly rending experience, decide as a group your willingness to give this person extra time.

NO feedback, NO cross-talk during this segment. Simply be with each other in deep listening.

### **“Business” matters (up to 10 minutes)**

At year's beginning, review **Behavioral Covenants and session structures**.

Later in the year, you'll want to discuss and plan your service projects.

### **Discussion (60 minutes)**

**Introduce** the topic and the questions (2 minutes)

Ask folks to **pause and ponder** this in a period of silence. (2 minutes)

**First response:** Ask folks to register their initial thoughts—in random order, but with **no feedback** during this segment.

**Then: Cross-conversation.** IF one person dominates, gently remind that person that we need to allow time for every group member to speak.

**Conclude discussion** with request for **final statements/last thoughts on this topic**—in random order, but with **no feedback**.

### **Feedback (5-10 minutes)**

Ask participants **what they liked** about this session. **What would they change? How?**

Take note during succeeding sessions of **who isn't present**. Let the other members know that you'll follow up to determine if all is well or not. Remind members that if they absolutely can't make a session, to please let you know.

### **Closing (2 minutes)**

**Note: Have copies of the session available for participants at the conclusion of each session, but don't distribute them up front. If someone asks about having an outline in hand, explain that we all tend to connect more freely when we're not tied to a paper.**

**Thank you!**

**You are a valued leader in Circle Ministry as it unfolds within our faith community!**