

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry Group Session Plan

The New Year

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Chalice Lighting: We light this chalice on the brink of a new year

Letting go of what has been
Open and hopeful for what may come
Renewed, restored, ready
To live Life fully anew

May we move forward with intention.—Lois Van Leer UUA Chalice Lightings Resource

Opening Words:

The ceaseless flow of endless time no one can check or stay;
we'll view the past with no regret, nor future with dismay.
The present slips into the past, and dream-like melts away;
the breaking of tomorrow's dawn begins a new today.
The past and future ever meet in the eternal now;
to make each day a thing complete shall be our New Year vow.
“The Ceaseless Flow of Endless Time”, John Andrew Storey (*Singing the Living Tradition* #350)

Check in: How is it with you today?

Topic/Readings: New Year’s

We live our years in a courtly dance, circling through a roundel of sun, tides, and seasons of body and soul that extend farther than our brief lifespan. We are ripples on a pond of incomprehensible depth. Every time we tell our little story, we evoke the larger story. Yet for all the vastness of space-time and our littleness, we are not alone, orphaned. At threshold times, we become aware of mysterious depths in and around us, of the pulls of time and tide, and of the backward and forward motion of generations coming and going. The word “January” derives from *Janus*, the mythological god who faces in two directions. We, too, are left to look both ways, to straddle past and future, the known and unknown, to sense time and eternity as we begin the annual ascent toward Light. It is ours to live out our lives amongst those tensions in hopeful expectation that moments here and there will rise out of the grip of familiarity, break open, and however fleetingly, become transparent. It is a long journey and we are often in a hurry to arrive, but in the words of a Hasidic tale, we learn that “sometimes we have to travel far to find what is near.” All we know for now is that something of time and opportunity passes through the riverbed of our minds, drawing us into the widening currents of a year, and leaving us a calendar of days that stretch out before us in a succession of beginnings—new each morning. For now, we follow the sun as it traces a hazy path through the cold skies of winter.—January 1-7, An Almanac for the Soul, Marv and Nancy Hills

Quotes: Take one from the table and read aloud.

Questions:

1. Responses to reading or any of the quotes.
2. What does the New Year mean to you?
3. What hopes, aspirations, and visions do you have for the upcoming year?
4. What are you bringing forward into the New Year? What are you leaving behind?

Likes & Wishes: How was this session for you?

Closing Reading: A Blessing for the New Year, John O'Donohue, To Bless The Space Between Us

On the day when
The weight deadens
On your shoulders
And you stumble,
May the clay dance
To balance you.

And when your eyes
Freeze behind
The grey window
And the ghost of loss
Gets in to you,
May a flock of colours,
Indigo, red, green,
And azure blue,
Come to awaken in you
A meadow of delight.

When the canvas frays
In the currach of thought
And a stain of ocean
Blackens beneath you,
May there come across the waters
A path of yellow moonlight
To bring you safely home.

May the nourishment of the earth be yours,
May the clarity of light be yours,
May the fluency of the ocean be yours,
May the protection of the ancestors be yours.

And so may a slow
Wind work these words
Of love around you,
An invisible cloak
To mind your life.

Extinguish Chalice

Loving Kindness Meditation

Quotes that will be on table to be read aloud (one for each person)

- “The life you have led doesn't need to be the only life you have.” — [*Anna Quindlen*](#)

- “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”
— [*Marcel Proust*](#)

- “Try new things, meet new people, and look beyond what's right in front of you. Those are the things to understanding this amazing world we live in.” — [*Andrew Zimmern*](#)

- “We live in a wonderful world that is full of beauty, charm and adventure. There is no end to the adventures we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open.” — [*Jawaharlal Nehru*](#)

- “Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma. Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.” — [*Steve Jobs*](#)

- “And now we welcome the New Year. Full of things that have never been.” — [Rainer Maria Rilke](#)

- Cheers to a New Year and a chance to get it right.—Oprah Winfrey

- You are never too old to set a new goal or dream a new dream.—C.S. Lewis

- What a wonderful thought that some of the best days of our lives haven't happened yet.—Anne Frank

- "Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on."—Hal Borland