

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry Session Plan
Nuance
Rev. Glenn Turner, October 2023

OPENING WORDS AND CHALICE LIGHTING

"We meet together each time to reflect upon and understand our lives.
We bring our pasts and share them; we bring our dreams and express them.
We use words, silence, and gestures.
Words can't define our lives,
But they help us to reach out to each other,
that we may be renewed, connected, and unburdened."
This is the work of our small community.

- Judy Mannheim

Buddhist thoughts on what to consider before speaking:

Is it true?
Is it kind?
Is it helpful?
Is it necessary?

MOMENTS OF MEDITATION/REFLECTION

Let us pause in silence, allowing our thoughts and feelings to settle before we begin our sharing.

SHARING/CHECK-IN

Let us focus on our joys and concerns, what is troubling us, what is inspiring us, what is weighing on our minds and calling for attention.

FOCUS: THE WISDOM OF NUANCE

READINGS:

Leviticus (New International Version)

17 "Whoever takes a human life shall surely be put to death. 18 Whoever takes an animal's life shall make it good, life for life. 19 If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done it shall be done to him, 20 fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him. 21 Whoever kills an animal shall make it good, and whoever kills a person shall be put to death. 22 You shall have the same rule for the sojourner and for the native, for I am the Lord your God."

Revelation 3:16

So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

— Edmund Burke

"You attack to protect, not to avenge. You strike to end suffering, not cause it."

— Tiana Dalichov, Agenda 46

"If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

— Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* 1918–1956

"Being against evil doesn't make you good. Tonight I was against it and then I was evil myself. I could feel it coming just like a tide... I just want to destroy them. But when you start taking pleasure in it you are awfully close to the thing you're fighting."

— Ernest Hemingway, *Islands in the Stream*

"Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster"

— Friedrich Nietzsche

"When one loses the capacity for nuance, one becomes an extremist, a dangerous individual capable of committing war crimes."

— Isaiah Senones

The mature person becomes able to differentiate feelings into as many nuances, strong and passionate experiences, or delicate and sensitive ones, as in the different passages of music in a symphony. Unfortunately, many of us have feelings limited like notes in a bugle call.

Rollo May

"Most of my opinions are not as informed and well rounded as I would like. I have to be humble enough to accept that I don't know enough. If my goal is to understand something true, then being challenged is a good thing. We need to be challenged occasionally and to get out of the echo chamber that is your own philosophical group or your own confirmation biased mind. The alternative is to only be able to hear one narrative and for those who oppose that narrative to be silenced, or to have uncivil debate by two polar opposite opinions. Truth is usually found to be hidden in a field of nuance and, as Albert Maysles said, "Tyranny is the deliberate removal of nuance."

— Eric Overby, Legacy

"In order to think through things clearly, we need other opinions and viewpoints in order to navigate into the nuance. We need civil debate to present opposing viewpoints and point out our blind spots. We need the ability to speak freely and civilly to one another."

— Eric Overby, Legacy

One evening, an elderly Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside each of us.

He said, "My son, the battle is between two 'wolves' inside us all. One is evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith."

"The same fight is going on inside you—and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf wins?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one that you feed."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1) What was your initial response on hearing of the Hamas attack on the Israeli settlements?
- 2) Has that changed since then? Why?
- 3) What are your fears about what is unfolding in the Middle East? Your fears about people's reactions/responses in the United States?
- 4) What are your hopes?

LIKES AND WISHES

HOUSEKEEPING

CLOSING WORDS:

We are grateful for this community, for the opportunity to listen and learn, and for the deepening of our friendship. May we support one another on our journeys.