

**Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website**  
**Small Group Ministry**  
**“Our Relationship with Death and Dying”**  
**Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene**

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

**Moment of silence**

**Opening words**

"For the sun and the dawn which we did not create; for the moon and the evening which we did not make; for food we plant but cannot grow; for friends and loved ones we have not earned and cannot buy; for this gathered company, which welcomes us as we are, and from wherever we have come; for our free churches that keep us human and encourage us in our quest for beauty, truth and love; for all that comes to us as gifts from sources beyond ourselves; for gifts of life and friendship, and for this day, may we give thanks."

-Richard M. Fewkes (adapted)

**Check-in** (up to 20 to 30 minutes, with 2 to 3 minutes each)

**Topic and sharing** (up to 70 minutes for reading, questions, a few minutes for reflection and making notes if desired, individual sharing, and optional discussion at the end, with an optional 5 minute break about midway in the session)

**Reading**

“Mourning is the constant reawakening that things are now different.”

-Stephanie Ericsson

“It’s only when we truly know and understand that we have a limited time on earth—that we have no way of knowing when our time is up—that we will begin to love each day to the fullest, as if it was the only one we had.”

-Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

“We know that all is impermanent; we know that everything wears out. Although we can buy this truth intellectually, emotionally we have a deep-rooted aversion to it. We want permanence; we expect permanence. Our natural tendency is to seek security where we believe we can find it. We experience impermanence at the everyday level as frustration. We use our daily activity as a shield against the fundamental ambiguity of our situation, expending tremendous energy trying to ward off impermanence and death. We don’t like that our bodies change shape. We don’t like it that we age. We are afraid of wrinkles and sagging skin. We use health products as if we actually believe that our skin, our hair, our eyes and teeth, might somehow miraculously escape the truth of impermanence.”

-Pema Chodron

“All goes onward and outward,

Nothing collapses

And to die is different from

What anyone supposes

And luckier.”

-Walt Whitman

“I died a mineral, and became a plant.

I died a plant, and rose an animal.

I died an animal, and I was man.  
Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?"  
-Rumi

### **Questions**

1. What experiences have you had with death and dying?
2. How have those experiences influenced your attitude about your own and others' mortality?
3. Have you, or do you plan to, discuss with your family and/or friends your wishes and plans regarding your own death in terms of: care plans if you are terminally ill ("advance directive", power of attorney for health care); organ donation; memorial service; burial or cremation plans; contents of your will; and other matters? Why or why not?
4. How does your religious belief or world view and whether or not you have a concept of an "after life" influence your view of death?
5. How would you like to be remembered? What legacy do you want to leave?

**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 5-10 minutes)

**Likes (celebrations, gratitudes, thank you, appreciation for needs met) and wishes (mournings, requests, please, recognition of needs not met)/check-out** (up to 5 minutes total)

**Closing words** (2 minutes for words and closing)

We give thanks for one another, for the chance to share our lives, to renew our spirits. May we be enriched by our gathering, committed to living life fully and to supporting one another.

**Extinguish the chalice or candle or sound a chime (and optional closing ritual)**

(Preparation for facilitator: bring the SGM facilitator training manual, paper and writing implements, the lesson plan, and your date book.)

Lesson plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee curriculum subcommittee  
(Rev. Steve Landale, Dick Loescher, Leora White) 2-11-09