## Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website Small Group Ministry **"Our Relationship with World Troubles"**

Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR

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

#### Moment of silence

#### **Opening words**

We gather in hope of experiencing compassion, being able to open our hearts, listen with care, and be truly present with each other. We also hope to see beyond this moment and beyond the limits of our daily concerns, and to remember that we are part of a larger world and of all that lives therein.

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

"We can realize that our very sorrow for the world, our dread for what might happen for the future beings and for our children and their children, our outrage at what is happening — all of these, which I summarize as "our pain for the world," are actually evidence of our interconnectedness. Otherwise we wouldn't care so much.

Now the mainstream thinking would have us privatize this grief and think that we are personally maladjusted or something. But this grief actually springs from deep caring. It is a shift that happens when you realize your sadness, the depth of sorrow — my God, what we're doing to each other! Look how we are deregulating clean air acts and pumping poisons into the atmosphere, creating so many hundred thousand more cases of bronchitis.

To even feel a little grief is actually good news for you because it shows that you are not sealed off. You are not morally autistic. It matters to you. You are capable of suffering with your world. In every spiritual tradition the capacity to "suffer with" — the literal meaning of compassion — is honoured." --Quote from interview with Joanna Macy

"Try to praise the mutilated world. Remember June's long days, and wild strawberries, drops of wine, the dew. The nettles that methodically overgrow the abandoned homesteads of exiles. You must praise the mutilated world. You watched the stylish yachts and ships; one of them had a long trip ahead of it, while salty oblivion awaited others. You've seen the refugees heading nowhere, you've heard the executioners sing joyfully. You should praise the mutilated world. Remember the moments when we were together in a white room and the curtain fluttered. Return in thought to the concert where music flared. You gathered acorns in the park in autumn and leaves eddied over the earth's scars. Praise the mutilated world and the gray feather a thrush lost, and the gentle light that strays and vanishes and returns."

--From "Try to Praise the Mutilated World", by Adam Zagajewski, from Poems to Live By in Uncertain Times

"Seven blunders of the world that lead to violence: wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, worship without sacrifice, politics without principle."

--Mahatma Gandhi

"To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and those places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction.

And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory."

From "You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train" by Howard Zinn,

#### Questions

1. What personal impact have "world troubles" had on you or your family?

2. How do you decide which, if any, of the complex, not easily solved "world troubles" you will make an attempt to have an impact on? What specifically have you done and how do you feel about those efforts?

3. What, if anything, has been helpful to you in coping with the daily deluge of information about "world troubles"? Have you found things that you can do to help others cope?

4. How does the condition of your personal and family life impact your interest in knowing about or responding to "world troubles"?

5. How do you deal with strongly differing opinions in your family or in your community about a war, or other social, political, or religious matters?

**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)

#### Likes and wishes/check-out (up to 5 minutes total)

Closing words (2 minutes for words and closing)

As we leave this gathering, may we carry one another in our hearts. May the fellowship we have shared expand our sympathy, strengthen our resolve, and help us cope with what we must deal with.

### 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) 3-23-09