

“Our Relationship with Work and Service”

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

We come together each time to honor and understand our lives. We bring our pasts and share them; 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, unburdened.

Adapted from Judy Mannheim

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

“Work is love made visible.” Kahil Gibran

“Work is either fun or drudgery. It depends on your attitude. I like fun.” Colleen C. Barrett

“Work is defined as something that people do not want to do and money as the reward that compensates for the unpleasantness of work.” Robert Theobald

Studs Terkel begins his book “Working” this way. “This book, being about work, is, by its very nature, about violence—to the spirit as well as to the body. It is about ulcers as well as accidents, about shouting matches as well as fist-fights, about nervous breakdowns as well as kicking the dog around. It is, above all (or beneath all), about daily humiliations. To survive the day is a triumph enough for the walking wounded among the great many of us.”

“**WHAT IS WORK?** Just as with money, our concept of work consists of a patchwork of contradictory beliefs, thoughts and feelings—notions we absorbed from our parents, our culture, the media and our life experience....

What is the purpose of work?...Now consider the following list of various purposes of paid employment and see which ones apply to you.

Earning money... A sense of security... Tradition... Enjoyment... Duty... Learning...
Prestige and status... Socializing... Personal growth... Success...
Creativity and fulfillment... Time structuring...

Have you noticed that work has two different functions: the material, financial function (i.e., getting paid) and the personal function (emotional, intellectual, psychological and even spiritual)?...In reality, there is only one purpose served by paid employment: getting paid. That is the only real link between work and money. The other “purposes” of paid employment are other types of rewards, certainly desirable, but not directly related to getting paid. They are all equally available in unpaid activities....Redefining “work” as simply any productive or purposeful activity, with paid employment being just one activity among many, frees us from the false assumption that what we do to put food on the table and a roof over our heads should also provide us with our sense of meaning, purpose and fulfillment. Breaking the link between work and money allows us to reclaim balance and sanity.”

Adapted from the book “Your Money or Your Life”, 2008, by Vicki Robin and Joe Dominguez with Monique Tilford.

Questions

1. How does your work (now or in the past, paid or unpaid) have an effect on others and the world?
2. How does your work (now or in the past, paid or unpaid) shape you?
3. What, if any, aspects of your work (now or in the past, paid or unpaid) do you consider spiritual (whatever that means to you)? Can you share any experiences of doing “mundane” tasks with a sense of greater purpose, reverence, inspiration, or spirituality?
4. How does what you do for work (now or in the past, paid or unpaid) as an adult compare with what you thought as a child you might want to “do” when you “grow up”? Are there different things you would like to do for work (paid or unpaid) in the future?

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)

If here you have found freedom, take it with you into the world. If you have found comfort, go and share it with others. If you have dreamed dreams, help one another, that they may come true! If you have known love, give some back to a bruised and hurting world. Go in Peace.

Lauralyn Bellamy

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) 1-9-09