



Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network

POWER OF CREATIVITY: Session Plan

Small Group Conversations, Anne Bailey coordinator

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(TOPIC READINGS start on p. 4)

OUR SMALL GROUP MISSION

These Small Group conversations are offered as a way to get to know each other better, as we explore the various topics selected by our Small Group Team, related to our life experiences, questions, joys, and challenges. We are free to share our thoughts and feelings, joys and struggles, as we choose, and are here to listen to and care about each other. (We are NOT here to be a therapy group ~ or to tackle “church politics”!)

We look forward to building closer connections with each other, as we spend this time together, and form new or deeper friendships and build our sense of community.

OUR SMALL GROUP COVENANT

As members of this Small Group of the Universalist Church, we covenant with each other to help make this experience both personally and spiritually rewarding, to nourish our sense of community, and to learn and practice right relationship.

We will try to arrive before the beginning of each session so that it can start on time. We will try to attend all of the meetings of our group unless we are ill or away, and will let the group know in advance when that will occur or by contacting the facilitator:

Facilitator Contact information:

We use these guidelines for sharing, as a pathway to a caring community:

- We will deeply listen and ask honest and open questions.
- We will respect confidentiality. What is said here stays here, unless we agree to share something outside of our group.
- We will allow others to speak without interruption.
- We will not try to fix, save, advise or correct.
- We will honor time for reflection and quietness and respect a member’s right to remain silent, as they choose.
- We will treat others with respect and without judgment.
- We will honor the diversity of thought and feeling and values among us.

CHECK IN

Check-in is a time to deepen our connections with each other by sharing joys, sorrows, challenges, and changes in our lives. Sharing is not required. Only share if you are comfortable. What is shared in group is confidential.

Connection is the energy created between people when they feel seen, heard, valued and understood. One of the goals of small group is to move out of our heads and into our hearts in order to deepen our connections with one other.

Authentic sharing from a place of honesty and vulnerability allows us to build a community of trust, caring, and belonging. The connections we build with one another become contagious. They grow and spread and infuse our larger church community with life and vitality.

1. WELCOME / INTRODUCTIONS :

Let's remember to **Silence cell phones! Speak up clearly, so all can hear.**

Remind folks to let us know and to remind us if they have a hearing issue or if we aren't speaking up enough, so we can be aware.

• At FIRST SESSION of the series: Let's introduce ourselves:

"Tell us a bit about yourself, for example:"

- Your name, where you live and how long you've been in this area
- How long have you been a UU, coming to our church
- Your family, what you do (or did) for work, any special passions or hobbies
(Model this by starting with yourself.)

Distribute MISSION/COVENANT/CHECK IN handout.

- **Read the MISSION statement orally - volunteers read COVENANT**
- **Remind folks to contact the facilitator if you are unable to come to a session** (if not included, give them your contact info. to add to their copy)
- **Read the CHECK-IN orally, in turn.**
- "Since time has been spent on introductions today (tonight), **we'll keep our check-in short**"; ex. "**Might you have a joy or feeling of gratitude you can share with us?**"

2. CHECK IN: (at 2nd and later sessions: repeat names again, if needed, and read the following aloud, as you choose):

Check-in is a time to deepen our connections with each other by sharing joys, sorrows, challenges, and changes in our lives. Sharing is not required. Only share if you are comfortable. What is shared in group is confidential.

Some **CHECK-IN PROMPTS:**

- *How have these past couple of weeks gone for you?*
- *Can you share some of your 'highs' and/or 'lows'?*
- *Has anything brought you a sense of gratitude or accomplishment? - of joy - or sorrow?*

3. OPENING: Use "chime" or bell to quiet folks; **LIGHT CANDLE:**

(3 reading choices below, you might vary this from session to session)

- *May "our separate fires kindle one flame" as we gather in this circle—bringing our stories, our reflections, our hopes and our struggles.*

May our candle flame lend light and promise for our time together.

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- *May we know once again that we are not isolated beings, but connected, in mystery and miracle, to the universe, to this community and to each other.*

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- *May our time together bring learning, understanding, compassion, encouragement, and hope as we share about our life journeys and passions.*

4. CENTERING: *In preparation for our conversation, let's take a few moments to center ourselves and be thankful for this time we have together in community.*

Please get comfortable, place both feet solidly on the floor, rest your hands on your thighs and let your shoulders drop. Gently close your eyes or focus on a spot a few feet in front of you on the floor. Bring your attention to the flow of your breath.

*Breathing in I calm my body.
Breathing out I smile.*

*Dwelling in this present moment,
I know this is a wonderful moment.*

Our life's path is not one we travel alone. We are in it together, and the company of spiritual friends helps us feel our interconnectedness.

Ring the chime: *"Slowly open your eyes."*

5. DISTRIBUTE READING:

Ask for **volunteers** to **read the paragraphs aloud, in turn.** You might include a **pause after the reading**, to allow time to reflect before responding.

6. POSE QUESTIONS to prompt sharing, invite folks to respond if and as they choose; If you choose, you can **split readings into sections**, with questions/conversation as you go along (some readings are already done this way).

Encourage silent spaces between reflections; be comfortable with silence.

You might prompt: **"Take some time to think about that."** - or the like.

FEEL FREE TO ADJUST or ADAPT THE QUESTIONS PROVIDED

You may not get to all of them, or you may want to modify them slightly or skip around a bit, even make up a new question, depending on what comes up in the conversation, to keep it moving along.

KEEPING YOUR GROUP ON TRACK: If a group member should go on and on, or responds inappropriately so that **conversation needs redirection**, gently ask that they give others an opportunity to share or say something like:

- **"Let's reconsider the question"**
- **"Let's stop now and take a moment to reflect."**
- **"Thank you for sharing your thoughts. Now let's move on"**.

You can also make reference to the covenant.

(If you are co-facilitating, work out a collaboration system with your partner, such as: when the other is facilitating, feel free to help guide the conversation, step in if you see a need to redirect.)

If the conversation has slowed down, you as facilitator can model responses to help the conversation along. **Some prompts could be:**

- **What are your thoughts about that?**
- **How does it make you feel?**
- **Can you say more about that?**
- **What does it make you think of?**

If the topic is really not going well, turn it back to the group:

- **"What do you want to do with this topic?"**

TOPIC READINGS start on next page:

NOTE: at previous session (and in email reminder) ask participants **IN PREPARATION for this conversation, to please try the following at home:**

Try to Keep an Aha! Journal:

Keep a notepad handy and when you have an idea for something that seems creative to you, or moments of sudden inspiration, take note of what you were doing when you got your Aha! Moment. Before we meet next, look back at your notes. Do you see any patterns? Are there times or places where you are more inspired than others? Bring your experiences to the group to share.

The POWER of CREATIVITY

SOME QUOTES:

Against the ruin of the world, there is only one defense – the creative act.

~ Kenneth Rexroth

“Sometimes you've got to let everything go - purge yourself. If you are unhappy with anything . . . whatever is bringing you down, get rid of it. Because you'll find that when you're free, your true creativity, your true self comes out.”

~ Tina Turner

“It is good taste, and good taste alone, that possesses the power to sterilize and is always the first handicap to any creative functioning” *~ Salvador Dalí*

“Don't think. Thinking is the enemy of creativity. It's self-conscious, and anything self-conscious is lousy. You can't try to do things. You simply must do things.”-

~ Ray Bradbury

“The highest prize we can receive for creative work is the joy of being creative. Creative effort spent for any other reason than the joy of being in that light filled space, love, god, whatever we want to call it, is lacking in integrity. . .”

~ Marianne Williamson

“Nobody cares if you can't dance well. Just get up and dance. Great dancers are not great because of their technique, they are great because of their passion.”

~ Martha Graham

“Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they were able to connect experiences they've had and synthesize new things.”

~ Steve Jobs

“Creativity often consists of merely turning up what is already there. Did you know that right and left shoes were thought up only a little more than a century ago?” *~ Bernice Fitz-Gibbon*

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For while knowledge defines all we currently know and understand, imagination points to all we might yet discover and create.” ~ *Albert Einstein*

“Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine and at last you create what you will.” -- *George Bernard Shaw*

“Every child is an artist; the problem is staying an artist when you grow up.”
~ *Pablo Picasso*

“Creativity is piercing the mundane to find the marvelous.” ~ *Bill Moyers*

“Creativity is the quality that you bring to the activity that you are doing. It is an attitude, an inner approach – how you look at things . . . Whatsoever you do, if you do it joyfully, if you do it lovingly, if your act of doing is not purely economical, then it is creative.” ~ *Osho*

QUESTION:

- Which of these quotes resonate with you and why?

READINGS:

“All of us dwell on the brink of the infinite ocean of life’s creative power. We all carry it within us; supreme strength, the fullness of wisdom, unquenchable joy. It is never thwarted and cannot be destroyed. But it is hidden deep, which is what makes life a problem. The infinite is down in the darkest, profoundest vault of our being, in the forgotten well-house, the deep cistern. What if we could discover it again and draw from it unceasingly?” ~ *Huston Smith, in The Religions of the World*)

Creativity helps us to be expressed. To be expressed simply means moving from the potential to the actual. As humans, our true potential is nearly limitless. Based on the choices we make, the chances we take, and the efforts we put in, our lives move forward in whatever trajectory we choose. We will essentially be expressed in various ways as the result of our choices.

Creativity, in whatever form we desire, helps us become who are we. Dancer, poet, entrepreneur, singer, artist, dad, friend, teacher, lover, whatever. It’s your choice. Your effort. Your path. However you choose to express becomes your life.

~ *Brené Brown*

QUESTIONS on next page:

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The desire to create is part of our human heritage and potential. Being creative is not just about painting, acting, gardening, or playing the piano. It can also be an approach to the way we live our lives.

- What is creativity to you? Did you keep any notes about - or remember - creative moments - **Aha! Moments** - over the past couple of weeks? Did you find any patterns? Were there times or places where you were more inspired than others?
- What are the ways you find to be creative? Can you share some things you are proud to have created?
- How do you feel when you're doing something creative?
- Can you name some ways you might try to nurture the creator in you. Are there any **routine tasks** that you can try to make more creative? How?

READING #2:

“Creativity is... seeing something that doesn't exist already. You need to find out how you can bring it into being and that way be a playmate with God.” ~ *Michele Shea*

“An early religious naturalist, philosopher/ theologian Henry Nelson Wieman, identified creativity and creative interchange as what he meant by God. As a Humanist I do not understand the need to call creativity by the name God. Why not simply say that creativity is at the heart of all that is . . . When we experience awe, wonder, reverence, love, beauty, or creativity, we are living in the realm of the spiritual.” ~ *William Murry, in Becoming More Fully Human*

QUESTIONS:

- Do you see ways spirituality and human creativity are connected? How are they related for you?
- Share a creative activity or moment that you experienced as religious or spiritual. Have you had any creative experiences that seem prayer-like? In what way?
- What are the benefits – to you, to society -- of creative endeavors?

As CONVERSATION comes to an end, you might ask for **last thoughts on the topic**:

“Do you have a thought from this conversation that you will carry home with you?”

CLOSING READING on next page:

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There is no use trying," said Alice. "One can't believe impossible things."

"I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast." ~ *Lewis Carroll*

RING CHIME and EXTINGUISH CANDLE (Choose one of these or one of your choice):

As our time together comes to a close, we give thanks for one another, for the chance to share our lives, and to renew our spirits in the company of friends. May we go forth enriched by our gathering, committed to living life fully, to loving life with more passion, and to supporting one another.

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*Remembering that the universe is so much larger than our ability to comprehend, let us go forth from this time together with the resolve to stop trying to reduce the incomprehensible to our own petty expectations, so that wonder -- that sense of what is sacred -- can find space to open up our minds and illumine our lives.*

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May we value our shared reflections and take away new understandings of ourselves, each other, and our being together. Thank you for sharing your story. Thank you for creating a place of safety. Thank you for listening with appreciation.

ANNOUNCE NEXT SESSION'S TOPIC: (unless last session)

Ask for a volunteer to bring in a CLOSING reading (if needed) for this next session (It can be something they particularly like, doesn't necessarily have to relate to the topic.)

if providing SNACKS, ask for a volunteer