

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY Plan for Facilitators
Progress?
Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA January 2004

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting: Select one From *Ecclesiastes* 1:2-9

“Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, all is vanity! What does man gain from all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south, and goes round to the north, round and round goes the wind and on its circuits the wind returns.

All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again.

All things are full of weariness; no man can utter it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; and there is nothing new under the sun.”

Reflection/Personal Sharing/Prayer (approximately 30 minutes)

(The facilitator should briefly remind the group of confidentiality/anonymity, that this is not the time for cross conversation, etc.)

Focus Readings: From George Carlin

“The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less. We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, yet more problems; more medicine, but less wellness. We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom. We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor. We've conquered outer space, but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things. We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less. These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion, big men and small character, steep profits and shallow relationships.

These are the times of world "peace" but constant conflict, more leisure but less enjoyment, more kinds of food but less nutrition. These are days of two incomes but more divorce, fancier houses but broken homes. These are days of quick trips,

disposable diapers, throw-away morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer to quiet, to kill. It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom, a time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to share this insight, or to just hit delete.”

Focus Questions:

What concerns do you have about the world today? Crime, injustice, the economy, war, terrorism, globalism, fundamentalism, loss of civility, lack of personal responsibility, pollution, over population, the quality of programming on TV?

How are you affected emotionally by what you see happening in the world?

What kind of progress have you made in your own personal life?

What do you see as signs of progress or hope in society?

What helps you manage your concerns?

What can you do to help human development?

Checkout/Likes and Wishes

(This is the time for facilitators to ask participants what they liked about this meeting and what they might wish for future meetings. This is also the time for any discussion of logistics.)

Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice: From Rabindranath Tagore

“Is it beyond thee to be glad with the gladness of this rhythm? To be tossed and lost and broken in the whirl of this fearful joy? All things rush on, they stop not, they look not behind, no power can hold them back, they rush on. Keeping step with that restless, rapid music, seasons come dancing and pass away. Colors, tunes, and perfumes pour in endless cascades in the abounding joy that scatters and gives up and dies every moment.”

Additional Reading from an unknown e-mail source

A Century Ago! Fun Facts About the Year 1901

- The American flag had 45 stars. Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Hawaii and Alaska hadn't been admitted to the Union yet. The population of Las Vegas, Nevada was 30. Alabama, Mississippi, Iowa, and Tennessee were each more heavily populated than California. With a mere 1.4 million residents, California was only the 21st most populous state in the Union!
- The average wage in the U.S. was 22 cents an hour. The average U.S. worker made between \$200 and \$400 per year. A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2000 per year, a dentist \$2,500 per year, a veterinarian between \$1,500 and \$4,000 per year, and a mechanical engineer about \$5,000 per year. Canada passed a law prohibiting poor people from entering the country for any reason.
- Sugar cost four cents a pound. Eggs were fourteen cents a dozen. Coffee cost fifteen cents a pound. Most women only washed their hair once a month and used borax or egg yolks

for shampoo. Crossword puzzles, canned beer, and iced tea hadn't yet been invented.

- Only 14 percent of the homes in the U.S. had a bathtub. Only 8 percent of homes had a telephone. 18 percent of households in the U.S. had at least one full-time servant or domestic helper. There were only 8,000 cars in the U.S., and only 144 miles of paved roads. The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph.
- Ninety percent of all U.S. physicians had no college education. Instead, they attended medical schools, many of which were condemned in the press and by the government as "substandard." More than 95 percent of all births in the U.S. took place at home. The average life expectancy in the U.S. was forty-seven. The five leading causes of death in the U.S. were:
 1. Pneumonia and influenza
 2. Tuberculosis
 3. Diarrhea
 4. Heart disease
 5. Stroke
- Marijuana, heroin, and morphine were all available over the counter at corner drugstores. According to one pharmacist, "Heroin clears the complexion, gives buoyancy to the mind, regulates the stomach and the bowels, and is, in fact, a perfect guardian of health."
- There was no Mother's Day or Father's Day. The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower.
- One in ten U.S. adults couldn't read or write. Only 6 percent of all Americans had graduated from high school. There were about 230 reported murders in the U.S. AND (you guessed it)... there were NO COMPUTERS!! What did people DO back then?

- from an unknown e-mail source