

Radical Hospitality

Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA

(Adapted from Compass Points RE Curriculum by Kate Covey)

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

In ancient times hospitality was a religious imperative since it was a matter of survival that ones door be open to the stranger who needed shelter and sustenance. Today hospitality also has an additional meaning. It is now the opening of ones self to the stranger –or to a friend. This is sometimes called radical hospitality. It requires ongoing conversation, not agreement and asks us to live with differences that won't go away.

~Kate Covey

Check-in: *What's new with you?*

Focus Reading:

One day when the Jewish rabbi Jesus was teaching a group of people, a lawyer asked him what one had to do to have eternal life. Jesus answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart...and you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

This did not sound too difficult to the lawyer. His next door neighbor was his cousin, and they got along fine. Just to be sure, the lawyer asked, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus replied, "A man was walking along the dusty road from Jerusalem to the town of Jericho when a gang of robbers suddenly attacked him. They beat him and tore off his clothes then ran away, leaving him bleeding and half dead. As luck would have it, it wasn't long before a priest, on his way to his work at the temple in Jerusalem, came by. And when he saw the bloodied man lying on the side of the road, he passed by on the other side. Another man came along and did the same. And then a Samaritan appeared in the distance." Jesus paused as the lawyer shifted his gaze – Samaria was a country not far to the north. The Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies and had been for centuries.

"As the Samaritan approached the man and heard his cries, he was filled with compassion. He hurried to his aid. He put the injured man on his donkey and took him to an inn, where he tended to him all night long. The next morning the Samaritan gave money to the innkeeper saying, 'Take care of this man and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'

"Now," said Jesus, "Which of these men, do you think, acted as a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"

The lawyer replied, "The one who showed mercy to him."

And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Adapted from Luke 10:25-37

GROUP ACTIVITY

(See the facilitators page at the end of this session)

Focus Questions: *Please complete the following sentences.*

1. What surprised me the most about this session was...
2. Something I might do differently now when I meet someone new is...
3. If most people practiced radical hospitality, I think the world would be...

Check-out/Likes & Wishes: How did this session go for you?

Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice:

Kindness is in our power, even when fondness is not. ~Samuel Johnson

For Facilitators Only

ACTIVITY

Needed: lemons, one per person, and a bowl or basket to hold them

How can we be open to those people who are radically different from us? Perhaps the first step is recognizing the differences and affirming those qualities which make us unique individuals. Share with the group this quote from Deborah Tannen (a contemporary linguist) in the book, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*:

*We all know we are unique individuals,
but we tend to see others as representatives of groups.*

Let every person choose a lemon and take a few minutes to really get to know the lemon – to smell it, to become familiar with its size and shape, to check out its bumps or pointy ends, to feel how smooth or textured the skin is. Advise everyone that they'll be expected to be able to identify their own lemon and to say what they think makes their lemon unique. Then collect the lemons, make sure they're mixed up well, and have the participants find their original one.

When each person and lemon are reunited, ask about the experience.

- Was it easy or hard to find the right lemon?
- What made it possible to pick the right one?
- Did it surprise them to find out how many differences lemons could have from each other?

If you want, ask the members to introduce their lemons to the group, pointing out its qualities.

Now ask the group if they can think of how this experience of getting to know a lemon can be applied to getting to know a new person. If they paid the same attention to people that they did to the lemon could it:

- Help them make a new friend?
- Help them be more understanding of someone who is different from them?
- Help them not stereotype a group of people?

Remind participants that when they open themselves up to meeting someone new, and especially when they accept the differences of that new person, they are extending “radical hospitality”.