



Unitarian Universalist Small
Group Ministry Network
Website



Session Plan

RADICAL HOSPITALITY

Unitarian Universalist Church, Hayward, CA, Kathryn LaMar, 11 December 2019

CHALICE LIGHTING

1 min

We light this chalice as a symbol of the light within every human heart. May our individual sparks meet and merge bringing both light and warmth to the world.

SILENT MEDITATION / CENTERING

2 min

The first sound of the gong brings us to silence. Please take time to center yourself, and temporarily push aside whatever might be preventing you from participating fully in tonight's session. The second sound of the gong returns us to each other's presence.

OPENING WORDS:

1 min

I am not a street person. I am not a token of my race or creed. I am not a statistic. I am not a divorcee. I am not an AIDS patient. I am not a sex object. I am not a laborer. I am not an at-risk kid. I have a mind. I have a heart. I have a soul. I dream. I feel. I care. I am a human being.

From Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love, by Daniel Holman and Lonni Collins Pratt

CHECK-IN (2 ROUNDS)

36 min

Please share some thing(s) about your life since last we met. If you feel comfortable about it, tell us about a time when you experienced hospitality, as a guest or a host, that was unexpected.

INTRODUCTION:

10 min

A Presbyterian minister, Paul A. Diehl, has this to say in a sermon about Radical Hospitality as one of five spiritual practices of fruitful congregations, based on a book by Robert Schnase:

The extension of welcome to another person is one of the primary understandings of hospitality. The Apostle Paul indicates that the manner in which Christians should welcome others is "as Christ has welcomed you."

Paul wrote these instructions as a conclusion to contentious arguments over differing values and practices among the community of faith. Paul reminds them that the ministry of Jesus was to the sick, to the sinful, to those who were not welcomed in most other situations. Paul says, "Welcome each other as Christ has welcomed you."

When the disciples ask, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus takes a child, vulnerable and dependent, unaccomplished and unproductive, and says, "This is what kingdom

residents will look like. You must become humble like this child. And whoever welcomes such a humble child in my name welcomes me.”

So the person to whom a welcome is extended by the Christian community must include the very least and the most humble.

What makes hospitality “radical” is the extent to which the church goes in order to engage people of every condition. The issue is never about comfort; it is about the sensitivity and commitment we have towards those outside our congregation.

When thinking about hospitality and welcoming others, typically a warm “hello” and a handshake or a hug in a brief encounter possibly including a question like, “how are you?” becomes the standard practice. But when I think about true hospitality, I imagine a host or hostess at a home who greets you at the door, takes your coat, engages you in conversation, takes you to where people are gathering, introduces you to those present, and makes sure you have what you need.

Hospitality in the Near Eastern culture in the days of the Bible always included a meal, a place to stay, and security for travelers. The story of the Good Samaritan was about someone who practiced deep, radical hospitality.

From the book *Radical Hospitality: Benedict’s Way of Love*, by Daniel Holman and Lonni Collins Pratt, we learn that:

The inspiration behind “Radical Hospitality” is the Rule of St. Benedict, which Christian monasteries have followed for over fifteen hundred years. Although monks choose a life of devotion set apart from society, Benedict knew that outsiders, pilgrims, and the poor would always find their way to the monastery door. Instead of viewing strangers as an interruption of their holy duties, Benedict emphasized the importance of welcoming the stranger. Instead of drudgery or something for which to make allowances, the unexpected guest is considered a means of grace.

Radical hospitality is based on listening to and acceptance of the other, and on the conviction that every life is sacred. But acceptance is not synonymous with condoning all about the other, or agreeing with the other. It is about receiving rather than judging. Radical hospitality challenges our sense of what is “normal” or “acceptable.” Radical hospitality is a challenge for living communities. We are called to actively make room for the marginalized, the excluded, the disenfranchised.

[The] tendency of ours to seek out comfort should tell us something about ourselves. We lack. We need... stronger medicine for our sickly souls. We need a transforming, shake-you-to-the-soles-of-your-feet kind of remedy. We need transforming love.

UU minister Karen Johnson Gustafson says this about transforming love:

Transformation is an ongoing process that is fed by the accumulation and integration of insight and experience. Clearly this is not the love of valentines or popular songs or even love that parents feel for children or that we feel for our friends and others from whom we seek love in return. That love springs freely and spontaneously and naturally from each person's personal reservoir. It is love longing to be given. It is love that is eagerly

sought. The love that transforms evil is an altogether different thing. It does not spring freely but must force its way through a blockade of other natural feelings that happen first. Feelings like fear and aversion and distaste.

READING IN THE ROUND

1 min

I turn to you to renew my life. ☹ I turn to the world, the streets of the city, the worn tapestries of brokerage firms, drug dealers, private estates, personal things in the bag lady's cart. ☹ Rage and pain in the faces that turn from me ☹ Afraid of their own inner worlds. ☹ This common world I love anew, ☹ as the life blood of generations who refused to surrender their humanity in an inhumane world courses through my veins. ☹ From within this world ☹ My despair is transformed to hope ☹ And I begin anew the legacy of caring. *Thandeka*

QUOTES TO PONDER

10 min

One New Testament word incorporates a profound truth: *xenos*, the word that means “stranger” in Greek, also means “guest” and “host”. This one word signals the essential mutuality that is at the heart of hospitality. No one is strange except in relation to someone else; we make one another guests and hosts by how we treat one another.

Ana Marie Pineda

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*

We are all wanderers, passing through, guests of the universe, and our job as a religious clan is to share earth's bounty and to set a warm, inviting place for one another.

Carolyn and Tom Owen-Towle

The following quotes are from the book *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love*, by Daniel Holman and Lonni Collins Pratt

[Hospitality] is instead a spiritual practice, a way of becoming more human, a way of understanding yourself. Hospitality is both the answer to modern alienation and injustice *and* a path to a deeper spirituality.

We both want and fear connecting with each other. Our resistance to others, resistance to change--these are housed in the mysterious realm of spirit. Our minds cannot conceive of solutions to our dilemma until our hearts are convinced to love.

Guests are crucial to the making of any heart. If you want to be a person of great spirit, you can't do life alone. If spirituality matters to you, you can't do spirituality alone either. To really grow as a human being you need other people.

Benedict tells us to offer an open heart, a stance of availability, and to look for God lurking in every single person who comes through the door.

Hospitality has an inescapable moral dimension to it. It is not a mere social grace; it is a spiritual and ethical issue. It is an issue involving what it means to be human. All of our talk

about hospitable openness doesn't mean anything as long as some people continue to be tossed aside.

It is an adventure... It is not something you do, as much as it is someone you become... You make room for one person at a time, you give one chance at a time, and each of these choices of the heart stretches your ability to receive others.

When it comes to hospitality we become less by what we omit doing. Every time we turn away we drop a little of our humanity.

There is a kind of gentle hospitality with the self that most of us fail to practice... We don't accept the stranger within. We dread the regions of ourselves we don't understand. By learning to value the otherliness of the actual stranger, we honor the mystery within us, too.

SONG: CHRISTMAS WITH THE FAMILY (Robert Earl Keene, Jr.) 4:20 min

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqN483jm6JE>

PREPARATION FOR GROUP REFLECTION 1 min

BREAK 10 min

GROUP REFLECTION / FEEDBACK 36 min

Two rounds. Take a moment of silence and consider your response to one or more of these questions:

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON RADICAL HOSPITALITY

- ☺ Offer some ideas for ways for us to practice “radical hospitality” in our daily lives.
- ☺ Tell us about a time that you “walked away from discomfort,” or a time when you embraced it?
- ☺ Are there some people that you feel uncomfortable approaching? Who are they, and why do you feel that way?
- ☺ Is there value for you in viewing the people who cross your path as having a message for you, or as being messengers of your subconscious, the universe, or God?
- ☺ Talk about some factors that hold you back from connecting with strangers.
- ☺ In one sense the idea of a gradual change that becomes a way of life is reassuring; you can take it one small step at a time. In another sense, it is off-putting because results can be so slow in showing up. Do you have any experience with making changes in this way?
- ☺ WRT not being judgmental in helping the stranger, will losing some of your judgment about others soften your own self-judgment?

SONG: PASSING THROUGH (traditional, performed by folk revival icons) **3 min**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxG5NvDzHrQ>

ANNOUNCEMENTS, FUTURE SESSIONS, SERVICE PROJECT **5 min**

SESSION FEEDBACK **5 min**

What worked for you, didn't work for you, might require revisiting our covenant?

EXTINGUISH CHALICE / CLOSING WORDS **1 min**

Spirit that glows in the darkness, expand our vision with faith so we may always remember the unending circle of life and death and love reborn that surrounds us with kindness and compassion. Spirit that glistens in the light, bless this community that shares so generously with their hands and their hearts. Keep us ever mindful of the powerful possibilities of love as we walk through all the seasons of our lives. Amen.

Nancee Campbell

SONG LYRICS FOR SKUUC WEDNESDAY EVENING SGM SESSION ON RADICAL HOSPITALITY

Merry Christmas From The Family (Robert Earl Keen, Jr.)

Mom got drunk and Dad got drunk
at our Christmas party
We were drinking champagne punch and
homemade eggnog
Little sister brought her new boyfriend
He was a Mexican
We didn't know what to think of him until he
sang
Feliz Navidad, Feliz Navidad

Brother Ken brought his kids with him
The three from his first wife Lynn
And the two identical twins from
his second wife Mary Nell
Of course he brought his new wife Kay
Who talks all about AA
Chain smoking while the stereo plays
Noel, Noel The First Noel

Carve the turkey Turn the ball game on
Mix margaritas when the eggnog's gone
Send somebody to the Quickpak Store
We need some ice and an extension chord
A can of bean dip and some Diet Rites
A box of tampons, some Marlboro Lights

Halleluja everybody say cheese
Merry Christmas from the family

Fran and Rita drove from Harlingen
I can't remember how I'm kin to them
But when they tried to plug their motor
home in
They blew our Christmas lights
Cousin David knew just what went wrong
So we all waited out on our front lawn
He threw a breaker and the lights came
on
And we sang Silent Night,
oh Silent Night, oh Holy Night

Carve the turkey turn the ball game on
Make Bloody Marys Cause We All Want One!
Send somebody to the Stop 'N Go
We need some celery and a can of fake
snow
A bag of lemons and some Diet Sprites
A box of tampons, some Salem Lights
Halleluja, everybody say cheese
Merry Christmas from the Family
Feliz Navidad!

PASSING THROUGH (Traditional)

I saw Jesus on the cross on a hill called Calvary
"Do you hate mankind for what they done to you?"
He said, "Talk of love not hate, things to do - it's getting late.
I've so little time and I'm only passing through."

Chorus:
Passing through, passing through.
Sometimes happy, sometimes blue,
glad that I ran into you.
Tell the people that you saw me passing through.

I saw Adam leave the Garden with an apple in his hand,
I said "Now you're out, what are you going to do?"
"Plant some crops and pray for rain, maybe raise a little cane.
I'm an orphan now, and I'm only passing through."

Chorus

I was with Washington at Valley Ford, shivering in the snow.
I said, "How come the men here suffer like they do?"
"Men will suffer, men will fight, even die for what is right
even though they know they're only passing through"

Chorus

I was at Franklin Roosevelt's side on the night before he died.
He said, "One world must come out of World War Two" (ah, the fool)
"Yankee, Russian, white or tan," he said, "A man is still a man.
We're all on one road, and we're only passing through."

Chorus, multiple times