

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
Small Group Ministry Program  
**Religious or Spiritual Milestones**  
Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR

CHALICE OR CANDLE LIGHTING OR SOUND A CHIME (2 to 3 minutes for this and silence and opening words)

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPENING WORDS

We are here to grow in wisdom and learn how to love better. As we do this in our own ways, we slowly become a blessing to those around us and a light to the world.

-Rachel Naomi Remen

CHECK-IN (up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person)

TOPIC AND SHARING (up to 70 minutes for readings, questions, a few minutes for reflection and making notes if desired, individual sharing, optional open discussion at the end if the group agrees, with an optional 5 minute break about midway in the session)

READINGS

He who is filled with love is filled with God himself.

Saint Augustine

Just as a candle cannot burn without fire, men cannot live without a spiritual life.

-Buddha

The Kingdom of Heaven is not a place, but a state of mind.

-John Burroughs

In our ecstasies of nature and friendship, sex and the arts, sports and thinking, travel, deprivation, celebrating and work, we are a channel through which beautiful memorable experiences flow, and we forget ourselves as we become that channel.

-Matthew Fox

Religion is our human response to the dual reality of being alive and having to die.

-John Buehrens

Actually, the very word “religion” comes from a Latin root that means to tie, to bind. Ultimately what ties us together, what makes us a religion, a united people, is what we love. Religion, our religion, is what we truly care about, what we want to preserve, embrace, and create.

-Peter Morales, President, UUA, in UU World

. . . If an experience puts you in mind of your own humanness, your connection to a vast network of natural phenomena, and to mysteries that can't be solved, you can call that an existential experience, or you can call it a spiritual experience. . . . The first returns you to your path of personal responsibility, meaning-making, ethics-making, and authenticity. The second leads you down the primrose path to supernatural enthusiasm.

-Eric Maisel

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Practically speaking, humanism is not a religion, because most of us associate the word *religion* with a system that includes divinities and the supernatural. . . . Humanism is similar to a religion in the way that it involves shared values with efforts to organize a community and is essentially a way of life.

-Greg M. Epstein

**QUESTIONS** (Please respond to whichever question or questions you feel moved to answer. It is not necessary to respond to all of the questions. You may also respond to any of the readings that you find to be particularly meaningful.)

1. Tell about your important religious or spiritual milestones.
2. Share about a peak experience, a moment of awe, and how that influenced your life.
3. What religious or spiritual beliefs, values, symbols, or practices are meaningful to you at present?

**SHARING** (up to 6 to 8 minutes each without interruption, depending on the time available, with optional open discussion at the end after all have shared)

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS** (up to 5-10 minutes). Alternatively, this agenda item can be done after the check-in, if the group decides to do that.

-Confirm next meeting date, time, location, and topic.

-Consider discussing the service project.

-Other

**LIKES** (celebrations, gratitudes, appreciations for needs met) and **WISHES** (mournings, requests, acknowledgements of needs not met)/**CHECK-OUT** (a few words or phrases from each who wants to share, up to 5 minutes total)

**CLOSING WORDS** (2 minutes for words, and closing)

We are grateful for this community, for the opportunity to listen and to learn, and for the making and deepening of friendships. May we support one another on our journeys.

**EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE OR CANDLE OR SOUND A CHIME** (and additional optional closing ritual if agreed to)

(Preparation for the facilitator. Please bring the SGM Facilitator Training Manual, paper and writing implements, the session plan, and your calendar/date book.)

Session plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry steering committee (Lyn Fischrup; Bonnie Koenig; Al Landy; Dick Loescher, chair).

October 19, 2013