

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website



Resolving To Change

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Covenant Group Session Plan

Written by Jim Hennigan December 2021

Welcome, Chalice Lighting: *Here we are, together in this space. By our love and by our covenant, we make this a holy place. We light the chalice of Unitarian Universalism in honor of the light that lives in each of us, the light that shines among us, and the light we bring into the world.*

Personal Check In: Briefly share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

Opening Words:

“Life goes by so very fast, my dears, and taking the time to reflect, even once a year, slows things down. We zoom past so many seconds, minutes, hours, killing them with the frantic way we live that it's important we take at least this one collective sigh and stop, take stock, and acknowledge our place in time before diving back into the melee. Midnight on New Year's Eve is a unique kind of magic where, just for a moment, the past and the future exist at once in the present. Whether we're aware of it or not, as we countdown together to it, we're sharing the burden of our history and committing to the promise of tomorrow.” — **Hillary DePiano**, spoken by *Mother Time* in [New Year's Thief](#) (2014), a one-act play

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. Some people make annual resolutions to change. Some don't. What's been your practice and why?
2. A resolution can only cover matters you have the agency to change. Whether or not you achieve your goal, is the mere act of claiming agency (and recognizing room for improvement) self-empowering?
3. Why are resolutions emphasized at New Year's? Why aren't mid-year resolutions normalized?
4. What are the attributes of a “well made” resolution? What has helped you to achieve your goals?

Sitting in Silence (Reflect on questions just posed as you prepare to hear readings)

Readings - Words from the Common Bowl: Quotes/Readings (see below)

Sharing - This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight. Please share responses to one or more of the session questions. **(It may be useful to take a brief break before Open Discussion)**

Open Discussion -This is a time to respond to something another person said about the topic or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts on this topic. Continue to practice deep listening.

Closing reading:

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, the passion to reach for the stars, to change the world.” — **Harriett Tubman** (1822-1913) abolitionist, activist

Announcements/Plans

Check out: As we close today, how are you feeling now?

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Readings:

“I made no resolutions for the New Year. The habit of making plans, of criticizing, sanctioning and molding my life, is too much of a daily event for me.” — **Anaïs Nin (1903-1977)**

“A resolution to avoid an evil is seldom framed till the evil is so far advanced as to make avoidance impossible.” — **Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)** in Far From the Madding Crowd (1874)

“Good resolutions are like babies crying in church. They should be carried out immediately.” — **Charles M. Sheldon (1857-1946)**, American Congregationalist minister and leader of the Social Gospel movement

“Just because the dates change, does not mean you have to change. The continuous path towards self-improvement is a timeless process.” — **Brittany Burgunder**, Former pro tennis player and eating disorder coach

“Sometimes, take a moment and ponder; yes, take a moment and stir your life just as you stir that delicious stew! Taste it to know how delicious or the otherwise it is! And if there be a need for a change, be swift and tactical.” — **Ernest Agyemang Yeboah**, Ghanaian writer and a teacher

“Most people will passively do exactly what they did last year. Whatever you do, don't let that person be you.” — **Richie Norton**, entrepreneur and author

“It does not matter where you are standing right now, what matters is where you are headed to.” — **Sanchita Pandey**, author on health and healing

“It is a new day, new month, new year, but it isn't a new you. You are the same person dealing with the same problems that you cannot dispatch by tearing off the calendar page. Solutions come incrementally, however much the sliding into magical thinking seems permissible when grass lies under a foot of snow.” — **Thomm Quackenbush**, author, from the novel A Creature Was Stirring

“I will live through this day only. I will not brood about yesterday or obsess about tomorrow. I will not set far-reaching goals or try to overcome all of my problems at once. I know that I can do something for 24 hours that would overwhelm me if I had to keep it up for a lifetime.” — **Abigail van Buren (1918-2013)** advice columnist, in essay “Just For Today” adapted from Al-Anon credo

“It has never been a matter of wonder to me that human resolutions are liable to change; one passion gives them birth, another may destroy them.” — **Antoine François Prévost (1697-1763)** in the novel Manon Lescaut (1731)

“Well, you have fifteen minutes left to keep the new year's resolutions you made last year at this time.” — **Jay Leno**, late night television talk show host