

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network
SMALL GROUP SESSION -
RISK TAKING. WHO PAYS?
Rev. Glenn Turner, UU Small Group, Auburn, ME

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

Here is a story from an old Afro-American in the mid-south. He called it "One Stick-Two Stick." "This is the way of the old African kings," he whispered.

In the story an old man is dying, and calls his people to his side. He gives a short, sturdy stick to each of his many offspring, wives, and relatives. "Break the stick," he instructs them. With some effort, they all snap their sticks in half.

"This is how it is when a soul is alone without anyone. They can be easily broken."

The old man next gives each of his kin another stick, and says, "This is how I would like you to live after I pass. Put your sticks together in bundles of twos and threes. Now, break these bundles in half."

No one can break the sticks when there are two or more in a bundle. The old man smiles. "We are strong when we stand with another soul. When we are with another, we cannot be broken."

from Women Who Run With Wolves - Clarissa Pinkola Estes

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health, cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining, general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: "RISK TAKING. WHO PAYS?"

During an early Republican debate in September 2011, a question came up about what would happen to a person who did not elect to purchase health insurance if he were to be severely injured in an accident.

Eugene Robinson described the scene in a Washington Post column:

"The lowest point of the evening, and perhaps of the political season, came when moderator Wolf Blitzer asked Ron Paul a hypothetical question about a young man who elects not to purchase health insurance. The man has a medical crisis, goes into a coma and needs expensive care. "Who pays?," Blitzer asked.

"That's what freedom is all about, taking your own risks, Paul answered. This whole idea that you have to prepare and take care of everybody..."

Blitzer interrupted: "But Congressman, are you saying that society should just let him die?"

There were enthusiastic shout of "Yeah!" from the crowd.

Granted, the shouts of “Yeah” were partisan and over the top.

The question “Who pays?” still hangs in the air.

Mountain climbing, operating a motorcycle without a helmet, a car without a seat belt, divorce, speeding, being uninsured, drug or alcohol addiction or abuse, obesity, jay walking, smoking - who picks up the tab? To what extent are we our brothers and sisters keepers? Is there a line? How do you draw it? Does freedom mean we're on our own, or does society find freedom so valuable that it is willing to foot the bill when someone goes too far? After all, there are few people who don't go too far, who don't make mistakes.

Discussion:

How much of a circle do you draw in including people whose actions cost you (in your role as taxpayer) money? Are there people you would exclude? To what extent are we in this together?

How do your religious beliefs influence how you decide?

Aren't we all sinners deserving of some sort of social “Grace?”

Are there limits to our helping others?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

A last question which is also an answer.

“What does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

Micah