



Unitarian Universalist
Small Group Ministry
Network Website



Session Plan
SHARED MINISTRY

Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church, Hayward, CA, Kathryn LaMar, August 2019

CHALICE LIGHTING

1 min

We're all in this together.

It's a reminder that we're part of nature, not apart from it.

It's a reminder that we're all members of the human family.

It's a reminder that we're all members of the family that lives and breathes in myriad forms.

It's a call to honor "the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Rev. Jan Carlsson Bull

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

For religious community, it's a model of aspiration.

In this liberal religious community, in this ministry of circles, each of us is called.

We're all in this together, this ministry that's shared.

Rev. Jan Carlsson Bull

CHECK-IN (2 ROUNDS)

36 min

Please share some thing(s) about your life since last we met. If you feel comfortable about it, mention something that may have allowed you to "serve" as a minister or spiritual leader in a context outside of your usual understanding of your roles in this congregation.

INTRODUCTION:

10 min

NOTE: The following material is from the first part of the book, *The Committee on Ministry Model*, by Robert Latham

- Mission is why a congregation exists.
- Ministry is everything it does to fulfill this mission.
- Mission is reason for being and ministry is how that reason is processed.

- There is a singular principle that governs the religious community driven by congregational polity: the congregation owns its mission and ministry.
- This means that all leadership and all organizational life are servants of this principle.
- Therefore, all success and all failure are owned by the responsible congregation. This is true irrespective of all other attributions having to do with success and failure.

Shared ministry emerges from a notion called “the priesthood of all believers.” It’s grounded in the early Christian understanding that experience of the divine was mediated solely through the figure of Jesus. No priests in the early Christian church. It was informal and egalitarian, with each believer called to use her or his particular gifts to strengthen the community.

Move ahead a few millennia. In the faith that came to be known as Unitarian Universalism, the notion of shared ministry took hold through our congregational polity—that is, the form of governance practiced. Just a few years ago a commission of the Unitarian Universalist Association issued a report called *Interdependence: Reviewing Congregational Polity*. This report claimed that one of the core identifying marks of Unitarian Universalism is the belief that “ministry of the congregation does not belong exclusively to ordained clergy, but to everyone ... we are all lay ministers, whether or not we choose to be professional religious leaders.”

The 20th century theologian James Luther Adams brought this home in his understanding of the “priesthood and prophethood of all believers.” Proclaimed Adams,

The prophetic liberal church is not a church in which the prophetic function is assigned merely to a few ... The prophetic liberal church is the church in which all members share the common responsibility to attempt to foresee the consequences of human behavior ... with the intention of making history in place of merely being pushed around by it.

“Yikes!” you might be saying. What have we gotten ourselves into if we affiliate with such a community? Well, we’re not practicing our faith alone; nor are we led hierarchically. The emphasis is on caring and sharing in pastoral and prophetic community. There are guides, yes; there are leaders, yes. But we’re all in this together.

When you respectfully and unabashedly share your objections about the war in Iraq with your neighbor, you are doing a social justice ministry. When you volunteer to teach Church School, you are ministering to children. When you catch yourself becoming strident in a congregational meeting, then calm yourself down so you can listen better to others; you are doing a community building ministry. When you come in early to set up for the coffee hour, you are doing a coffee ministry. When you recall that someone you met at coffee hour has been out of work for six months and pick up the phone to express your support for that person, you are doing an encouragement ministry.

The following information is from *Rev. Dr. Ellen Johnson-Fay*

Shared ministry is based on the understanding that ministry is not the possession of ministers alone, but is shared by all who choose to call themselves Unitarian Universalists. Shared ministry is grounded in the understanding that we all are called to use our gifts in the ministry of the church, because the existence of this community depends upon the sharing of our gifts.

But our ministry is not limited to what happens within our walls. Ministry is what we might do with our whole lives, if we looked at it that way.

There are times when we all just need a sanctuary for our souls, a time and a place when we can simply be, simply rest in the moment, draw nourishment for the often draining demands of our daily lives. We need a time to rest in the grace and generosity of others. But each of us needs to identify our gifts, to discern our call, to see the way Unitarian Universalism does, or could, inform our daily life. What I wish for us is that we become the people, the congregation, we are capable of becoming.

QUOTES TO PONDER

10 min

This is the true joy of life – being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; being a force of nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

George Bernard Shaw

Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened.

Buddha

Men do not really live for honors or for pay; their happiness is not in the taking and holding, but in the doing, the striving, the building, the serving.

Harry Marsh

One of the most valuable things we can do to heal one another is listen to each other's stories.

Rebecca Falls

It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life that no [person] can sincerely try to help another without helping him[her]self.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve ... you only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

...as soon as you think of yourself as teaching contemplation to others, you make another mistake. No one teaches contemplation except God, who gives it. The best you can do is write something that will serve as an occasion for someone else to realize what God wants of him.

Thomas Merton

We cannot escape most of the crises in our lives, nor should we. In fact, these events frequently provide the energy for movement on our spiritual journey, even when we are stuck along the way...we ask questions about our own life. We wonder about meaning. Our present view may become inadequate. We ask deeper questions. Even joyful experiences can propel us forward.

Janet O. Hagberg

...the wisdom of spiritual direction is precisely that we refuse to stand between God and the person who so needs to hear God for himself, for herself.

Gordon T. Smith

Growth can't be constrained when the journey unfolds naturally and we are open to possibility and unfamiliar paths.

Bridget Geegan Blanton

A point comes on the spiritual journey, however, when a healing of one's early religious experience must occur in order for wholeness to be realized. This healing requires a transformation of the person *and* of the traditional religious images, symbols, and words. Such transformation allows for a new way to experience these traditions and, therefore, a whole new appreciation of spirituality. It's coming full circle to wholeness.

Janet O. Hagberg

We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

It is easier to find guides, someone to tell you what to do, than someone to be with you in a discerning, prayerful companionship as you work it out yourself. This is what spiritual direction is.

ugene H. Peterson

Song: Pilgrim (Steve Earle)

5 min

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

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 of these questions:

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON SHARED MINISTRY

1. What does “shared ministry” mean to you?
2. Do you feel you have found *your* ministry? What is it?
3. If you were to fully affirm your ministry whenever you are here in this Small Group, how would this affect your behavior and experience in the group?
4. Tell us about a time when you felt especially ministered to? Where were you? How did it feel?
5. Tell us about a time when you experienced a feeling that you had ministered to another. What was the situation? How did it feel?
6. How do you make a difference in your community of faith and beyond?
7. How do you feel about the idea that SKUUC might be a church filled with people who minister to one another? Would you feel differently than you do now about belonging to such a church/congregation?
8. This group is part of a Small Group Ministry. How could we make it a larger ministry?

SONG: Forward Into Light (Linda Allen)**3 min**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUEizXO8DAc>**FUTURE TOPICS, SERVICE PROJECTS****5 min**

These are the 2019-2020 Soul Matters themes:

What Does it Mean to be a People of...

- Sept: Expectation
- Oct: Belonging
- Nov: Attention
- Dec: Awe
- Jan: Integrity
- Feb: Resilience
- March: Wisdom
- April: Liberation
- May: Thresholds
- June: Play

SESSION FEEDBACK**2 min****EXTINGUISH CHALICE / CLOSING WORDS****1 min**

Wherever there is a meeting that summons us to our better selves, wherever our lostness is found, our fragments are reunited, our wounds begin healing, our spines stiffen, and our muscles grow strong for the task—there is ministry. Nay all of us minister. May our ministry be a blessing to this congregation and to the larger world.

*Adapted from the Rev. Gordon
"Bucky" McKeeman*

SONG LYRICS FOR SKUUC WEDNESDAY EVENING SGM SESSION, AUGUST 2019**PILGRIM (Steve Earle)**

I am just a pilgrim on this road, boys (x 3)

This ain't never been my home

Sometimes the road was rocky 'long the way, boys (x 3)

But I was never travelin' alone

We'll meet again on some bright highway (x 3)

Songs to sing and tales to tell

But I am just a pilgrim on this road, boys (x 3)

Until I see you fare thee well

Ain't no need to cry for me, boys (x 3)

Somewhere down the road you'll understand

'Cause I expect to touch his hand, boys (x 3)

Put a word in for you if I can

FORWARD INTO LIGHT (Linda Allen)

(younger voices)

Forward into Light, A new day has begun
Marching boldly to the future, Justice has been won
We have found our voices, Hear our song throughout the land
Failure is impossible, The vote is in our hands

(older voices)

Failure was impossible, We struggled for so long
We were ridiculed and silenced, But the work was carried on
Failure was impossible, Our vision was too strong
We planned and marched and lobbied, Then our daughters carried on

Together:

Forward into Light -- Failure was impossible
A new day has begun -- We struggled for so long
Marching boldly to the future -- We were ridiculed and silenced
A new day has begun -- But the work was carried on

We have found our voices -- Failure was impossible
Hear our song throughout the land -- Our vision was too strong
Failure is impossible -- We planned and marched and lobbied
The vote is in our hands -- Then our daughters carried on

We thank you: Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frederick Douglass, Mary Olney Brown, Arthur Denny, Ynez Milholland, Alice Paul, Emma Smith DeVoe, May Arkwright Hutton, Cary Chapman Catt, Cora Eaton, Abigail Scott Duniway (add your own favorites!)

Repeat first two verses as duet.