

## Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

### “Slowing Down”

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#### Chalice Lighting

Mindful of truth ever exceeding our knowledge, and community ever exceeding our practice, reverently we covenant together, beginning with ourselves as we are, to share the strength of integrity and the heritage of the spirit in the unending quest for wisdom and love.

#### Check in:

For the one hour drop-in groups: A brief check in such as “how is it with your spirit today?”

For the two hour covenant groups: 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 for approximately \_\_\_\_ minutes.

#### Topic: Slowing Down

**Meditation:** I would suggest at least two minutes of shared silence.

#### Readings:

1. By Deena Metzger

*There are those who are trying  
to set fire to the world.*

*We are in danger.*

*There is time only to work slowly.*

*There is no time not to love.*

2. Two people had a wood chopping competition. The champion was a bit older than he used to be – well, who isn't – but he was still the champion. Everyone knew there would come a day when he would have to retire but he was showing no signs of losing his effectiveness or his skills at chopping wood in record time. However, one day, a new would-be challenger decided to challenge the champion. She said to the champion, “Let's see who can chop the most wood in one day. Let's chop wood from sunrise until sunset and at the end of the day the one who has chopped the most wood will be the winner.” The champion looked at the young, strong, eager challenger and said, “OK. Let's do it.” The challenger looked at the grey haired, ageing champion and thought, “Aha! I think I'm going to win this one.”

So, the challenger worked very hard, stopping only for a brief lunch break; whereas our champion had a leisurely lunch and took several breaks during the day. At one point he even made a cup of tea for the challenger and said, “Why don't you stop for 5 minutes and we can drink tea together.” The challenger replied, “Don't be silly! I'm chopping wood and you're not. I want to win!”

Well, at the end of the day – at sunset - the challenger was surprised and annoyed to find that the ageing champion had chopped far more wood than she had. “I just don't get it,” she said. “Every time I checked, you were taking a rest, yet you chopped more wood than I did.” The winner

looked at her with a warm, genuine smile of friendship and said, “When I was sitting down to rest, did you not notice that while I was resting I was sharpening my axe?”

**Possible Questions:** (listen for the one that wants to claim you)

What happens to your thinking, your heart and your relationships when you are driven by an unexamined sense of urgency or haste?

Or you might simply ask yourself: How does this story (or the brief reading) speak to my life today?

**Guidelines for Sharing** – (leader reads these guidelines, or has another person do it, then s/he can repeat the questions again)

We’ll each speak for roughly \_\_\_\_\_minutes, with no cross talk or interruptions. **Cross talk means, not only not interrupting but also refraining from trying to fix, save, advise or set someone else straight, directly or indirectly.** It is wise to speak in the first person, “I think, I feel...”

When we are listening: Try to listen to each other as if you were listening to, or watching, your own thoughts. Let others’ words simply fall down into your heart. It is not necessary to give the person reassurances that they are being heard, such as nodding or eye contact. By simply listening together we create a holding space for each speaker’s inner wisdom to emerge. Comfort and care can be offered after the group session. **Practice silence after a person has spoken, to honor their “inner teacher.”**

When it is your turn to speak it is not necessary to respond to the persons who have gone before you, though you may find yourself building on what has been shared already. Find out what your own inner wisdom wants to say. Together we create a quilt of wisdom, the design is a surprise.

(Leader can re-read the questions here)

**-Sharing around the circle**

-After everyone has shared (some groups go around twice, or more)...

**Likes and Wishes** – What did you like about this session? What would you wish to be different if anything?

**-Closing words** (by Simon and Garfunkle)

Slow down, you move too fast, you got to make the morning last, just, kicking down the cobble stones, lookin’ for fun and feelin’ groovy. Feelin’ groovy. La-dada-da-da-da-da feelin’ groovy.

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