

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY Plan for Facilitators  
**Solitude and Loneliness**  
Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA May 2004

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude.

(Henry David Thoreau, in Walden)

Check in/Sharing (approximately 30 minutes)

(The facilitator should briefly remind the group of confidentiality/anonymity, that this is not the time for cross conversation, etc.)

Focus Reading:

All human beings are alone. No other person will completely feel like we do, think like we do, act like we do. Each of us is unique, and our aloneness is the other side of our uniqueness. The question is whether we let our aloneness become loneliness or whether we allow it to lead us into solitude. Loneliness is painful; solitude is peaceful. Loneliness makes us cling to others in desperation; solitude allows us to respect others in their uniqueness and create community.

Letting our aloneness grow into solitude and not into loneliness is a lifelong struggle. It requires conscious choices about whom to be with, what to study, how to pray, and when to ask for counsel. But wise choices will help us to find the solitude where our hearts can grow in love.

(Henri J.M. Nouwen in Bread for the Journey)

Focus Questions:

- Most of us experience a sense of loneliness at times. Are there certain times of the day, certain days of the week, or particular occasions on which you feel most lonely?
- Describe a time when you were alone and felt lonely and unhappy.
- Describe a time when you were alone and felt peaceful.
- What is helpful to you at these times?
- How do you try to deal with feelings of loneliness when they arise?
- How does the experience of solitude contribute to your spiritual growth and development?

Checkout/Likes and Wishes

(This is the time for facilitators to ask participants what they liked about this meeting and what they might wish for future meetings. This is also the time for any discussion of logistics.)

### Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice:

Take courage friends.

The way is often hard, the  
path is never clear,  
And the stakes are very  
high.

Take courage.

For deep down, there is  
another truth:

You are not alone.

(The Rev. Wayne B. Arnason)