

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Session Plan for Facilitators

Soul Work

Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA, Rev. Dr. Stephan Papa, April 2005

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

“It’s hard to know when to respond to the seductiveness of the world and when to respond to its challenge. If the world were merely seductive, that would be easy. If it were merely challenging, that would be no problem. But I arise in the morning torn between the desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day.” E. B. White, writer

Reflection/Personal Sharing/Prayer (approximately 30 minutes)

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

Focus Readings:

“...The evil of racism is not only structural and institutional; it is also spiritual. This means that all of our analysis, no matter how sophisticated, and all of our programs, no matter how well designed, will never be sufficient by themselves to make us anti-racist. We must also be ‘willing to do the difficult soul work necessary for spiritual transformation.’” Paul Razor in *Soul Work* p. 111

“Throughout American history, middle-class religion’s association with the social and economic establishment has limited its ability to engage social justice issues at a deep level, since overturning the existing system would be contrary to its own interests.... Parker Palmer makes a similar observation... ‘The religion of the American middle class sometimes seems to mock the Gospels; it aims at enhancing the self-esteem of persons who have material comfort while ignoring conditions of poverty and pestilence which deprive a whole class of people of life itself, let alone feelings of self-worth.’” Paul Razor in *Soul Work* p.107

“The white piety of ‘innocence’ and the lack of awareness on the part of many whites of the brokenness of body and soul among peoples of color leave little room for initiating authentic conversations and for developing strategies that alleviate the conditions of racial oppression. Such ignorance works against the building of trust and undermines the depth of relationship necessary to eliminate oppression. It is critical to our religious conversations that we all recognize that the loss of wholeness within ourselves is disorienting, fragmenting, and debilitating for everyone.” Mel Hoover in *Soul Work*

Focus Questions:

What is your experience with people of color today?

What feelings do discussions of racism bring up for you?

How does the racism of our society affect you?

How do you feel torn between “saving” the world and “enjoying” the world?

What prevents you from being more anti-racist?

How is racism a spiritual issue?

How can we help one another in pursuing racial justice?

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:

“The soul work that whites need to do turns us to the sources of spiritual transformation that are transpersonal—to the presence of a deep reality of wholeness, connection, and grace that supports us beyond our brokenness and urges us toward a more daring communion.”

Rebecca Parker in *Soul Work* p. 182.