

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry Program
Spiritual Exploration
Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, January 2015

CHALICE OR CANDLE LIGHTING OR SOUND A CHIME (2 to 3 minutes for this and silence and opening words)

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPENING WORDS

Let our sharing together provide a place where memories are rooted, where mysteries are pondered, where dreams are nourished, where love is freely given, where failures are owned and accepted, where sorrows are transformed, where our lives are deepened, challenged, and uplifted. Let this be such a time and place.

-Adapted from Rev. David E. Bumbaugh

CHECK-IN (up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person)

TOPIC AND SHARING (up to 70 minutes for readings, questions, a few minutes for reflection and making notes if desired, individual sharing, optional open discussion at the end if the group agrees, with an optional 5 minute break about midway in the session)

READINGS

A spiritual practice is any regular, intentional activity that serves to significantly deepen the quality and content of your relationship with the miracle of life.

-Scott Alexander, *Everyday Spiritual Practices*

Your life is your practice. Your spiritual practice does not occur someplace other than in your life right now, and your life is nowhere other than where you are. You are looking for answers, insight, and wisdom that you already possess. Live the life in front of you, be the life you are, and see what you find out for yourself.

-Karen Maezen Miller

The kind of spirituality I value is one in which you get great joy out of contributing to life, not just sitting and meditating, although meditation is certainly valuable. But from the meditation, from the resulting consciousness, I would like to see people in action creating the world that they want to live in.

-Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD

I imagine that an evolving faith—as ours is and I trust always will be—brings with it the possibility of faltering words, changing viewpoints, open-ended questions and answers. The challenge before us is to creatively find a means to capture our religious values and beliefs in words and symbols that others (and we) can understand.

-Rev. Barbara Wells, UU Minister

Many of the people who attend religious services in our society are not interested in theology, want nothing too exotic and dislike the idea of change. They find the established rituals provide them with a link with tradition and give them a sense of security.

-Karen Armstrong, *A History of God*

We all - whether naturalists, atheists, Buddhists, or Christians - see the world through the grid of an interpretive framework - and ultimately this interpretive framework is religious in nature, even if not allied with a particular institutional religion.

-James K. A. Smith

God is a metaphor for that which transcends all levels of intellectual thought. It's as simple as that.

-Joseph Campbell

QUESTIONS and REQUESTS (Please respond to any of the questions, requests, and readings you feel moved by. It is not necessary to respond to all of them.)

1. Share about some of the important steps on your path of spiritual, religious, or worldview exploration.
2. What values, beliefs, traditions, or practices from this path are still meaningful to you today?
3. Tell about a "spiritual" or "peak experience" you have had.
4. What spiritual questions or practices do you long to explore?

SHARING (up to 6 to 8 minutes each without interruption, depending on the time available, with optional open discussion at the end after all have shared)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (up to 5-10 minutes). Alternatively, this agenda item can be done after the check-in, if the group decides to do that.

-Confirm next meeting date, time, location, and topic.

-Consider discussing the service project.

-Other

LIKES (celebrations, gratitudes, appreciations for needs met) and WISHES (mournings, requests, acknowledgements of needs not met)/CHECK-OUT (a few words or phrases from each who wants to share, up to 5 minutes total)

CLOSING WORDS (2 minutes for words, and closing)

Grateful for the opportunity to share this time and space together, we prepare to go now our separate ways, hopefully renewed by the energy of each other's company, hopefully invigorated by the opportunity to communicate compassionately. As we have grown while we're together, may we also grow while we are apart, may we be strengthened by the inspiration of the connection which we forged together today. And may we remain so strengthened, until we meet again.

-Vid Axel

EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE OR CANDLE OR SOUND A CHIME (and additional optional closing ritual if agreed to)

(Preparation for the facilitator. Please bring the SGM Facilitator Training Manual, paper and writing implements, the session plan, and your calendar/date book.)

Session plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry steering committee (Lyn Fischrup; Bonnie Koenig; Al Landy; Dick Loescher, chair).

November 14, 2014