

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network

SESSION PLAN

“The Blessing of Caring”

By Ellin Snow, Edmonds UU Church, Edmonds, WA, April 2011

CHALICE LIGHTING: At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us. (*Albert Schweitzer*)

GATHERING SILENCE: 1-2MINUTES

CHECK IN (40 MINUTES)

OPENING WORDS: Loss of hope, loss of heart, self doubt, difficult circumstances. Who among us has not experienced these occurrences? We may find ourselves on a metaphorical path which leads down a steep and rocky incline toward a lonely and isolated crater. Feeling alone and sensing that no one else has felt as we do right now, we pull into ourselves even further.

Just as in the newsworthy incidence of a mine collapse, we are not aware of the activity going on up at the surface. We cannot hear the voices of those who are trying to bring us up and out safely. And yet, they are almost always there. Perhaps the modes of rescue do not always fit our personal styles. Perhaps the negatives hammering in our heads cover the sounds of the ones trying to get to us.

And yet, and yet, at some point, in looking up for a moment---in quieting our own chatter for a brief time---we see a point of light, hear a kind and caring voice calling down to us. It is at this moment in time that we make a choice---a compelling decision---to dare to respond, to reach up for the hand reaching down to us. Sunlight is a mere short distance away, but we must move toward it. With the borrowed confidence of one who is not down in the hole, we can find the foothold to exit that space, to dare to share what has brought us down, and to know that we may find a place in the sunshine again. (*Ellin Snow*)

FOCUS (60 MINUTES)

These are questions to help you to start thinking about the Opening Words. Feel free to use them as only a starting place for your response. Answer all or none as you are so moved.

- 1) Can you think of a time when **you** were the one up at the top, reaching down to someone caught in the metaphorical crater? What were your thoughts and feelings at that time?
- 2) What do you recall doing or saying, and how was that received?
- 3) Were you ever the one trapped down in that dark space? Can you speak a bit of that time and how you made it up and out?
- 4) Do we, as human beings, have any obligation or moral imperative to be the ones to reach down? What happens if our help is rejected?
- 5) What else might you wish to say on this topic?

ADMINISTRIVEA: (Announcements, etc.) Now would be the time to speak together about any upcoming projects for the church or community.

LIKES AND WISHES: (What **about your own contribution** did and did not work for you in today’s session? Can you offer an appreciation to yourself for how you added to today’s gathering?)

CLOSING WORDS: Each morning we must hold out the chalice of our being to receive, to carry, and give back. (*Dag Hammarskjold*)