

**Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website**  
**CCUU Covenant Group Session**  
**Those Who Have Touched Our Lives**  
**Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist, Palatine, IL**

**Pre-Meeting Preparation**

At the end of the previous session, or sometime before this session, give to group members the preparation page for Session (attached at the end of this document.)

**Chalice Lighting and Reading:**

**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

**Check-in.**

**Preliminaries**

Introduce any new members and distribute new address lists (if necessary). Walk through the interim covenant line by line and agree on specific meanings as well as make any changes required for the group to feel comfortable living with this covenant for a while. End this section with a group reading of the interim covenant.

**Transition**

Help the group move from preliminaries to silence with directed deep breathing, soft words, music, or other meditative techniques. One possibility:

Relax your body. Breathe slowly and evenly. If you wish, reflect on small ways we touch each other's lives—a recent time when you have given someone a special smile, a few gentle words, a little favor. Or when someone has done the same for you.

End meditation with one of these alternatives:

- Play “In My Life” by the Beatles
- Read the reading below

**“What is precious is you in others, others in you.**

**We enter into the being and lives of others, as they do into ours.**

**Sometimes momentarily.**

**Sometimes enduringly.**

**This is what love essentially is, to be part of one another.**

**In simple sympathy, in close friendship, in shared stories, in sorrow and in joy.”**

**-- Jacob Trapp**

**Deep Sharing/Deep Listening**

In preparation for this session, you were asked to reflect on someone or more than one person who has touched your life. You might have brought along a picture, a drawing, a reading, or a piece of music that reminds you of that person. We're going to share those stories now. Let's start with one story each for a start. If you brought a memento, please pass it around the circle.

### ***Optional Questions or Activities for Facilitator***

- Did anyone's story remind you of someone else who has touched your life?
- Did you notice any commonalities in these stories?
- We've talked about those who have touched our lives in a positive way. What are the characteristics of these people or our relationships with them that's different from authoritative figures you have known?
- Would you like to share another story?

### **(Optional Reading to Jump Start Discussion or Close the Discussion)**

#### **Dog Days, by Gary A. Kowalski**

**Everyone needs a spiritual guide: a minister, rabbi, priest, therapist, or wise friend. My wise friend is my dog. He has deep insights to impart. He makes friends easily and doesn't hold a grudge. He enjoys simple pleasures and takes each day as it comes. Like a true Zen master, he eats when he's hungry and sleeps when he's tired. Best of all, he befriends me with an unconditional love that humans would do well to imitate.**

**Of course, my dog does have his failings. He's afraid of firecrackers and hides in the closet whenever we run the vacuum cleaner. Bu unlike me, he's not afraid of what other people think of him or anxious about the future. He barks at the mail carrier and the newsboy, but, in contrast to some people, he never growls at the children or barks at his spouse.**

**Mark Twain remarked long ago that human beings have a lot to learn from the Higher Animals. Just because they haven't invented static cling, ICBMs, or television evangelists doesn't mean they aren't spiritually evolved. Let other people have their mentors, masters, and enlightened teachers. I have a doggone mutt.**

**-- Gary A. Kowalski, "Green Mountain Spring and Other Leaps of Faith"**

### **Check-out**

### **Closing Reading/Extinguishing the Chalice**

#### **Reading:**

**"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."**

**-- Wayne B. Arnason**

## **Preparation for this Session – Those Who Have Touched Our Lives**

On our journey through life, many people have loved us, inspired us, believed in us, and helped us. Let's take time to remember some of their lessons and their gifts.

Think of 1-3 individuals who have touched your life in an important and positive way. The people could be living or dead, fictional or real, people you've met or simply heard about. The following are questions you might consider while thinking about them.

1. How did they teach you, help you, love you, inspire you, challenge you, or believe in you?
2. What values have they demonstrated that you admire?
3. Do their actions continue to have an influence in your life? Why?
4. Consider bringing a memento, photo, a drawing or other work of art, or a brief reading or piece of music that you associate with the individual(s) you've chosen. Why does this remind you of that person?

Stephanie Certain Matz, adapted from FUCSJ