

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
Small Group Ministry Program  
**Understanding Differences**  
Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR March 2012

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

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPENING WORDS

If the colors of our skin or the lands of our ancestors are different, if the genders we claim are different, if the stages of our lives are different, if our means of achieving the common good are different, if who we love and how we love are different, if the spiritual paths we follow are different, if our abilities to think and do are different, if our resources are different, these things need not divide us. We strive and hope that even with our differences we can learn to join spirits and hearts and live together with understanding and compassion.

-Adapted from Michael Sallwasser

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

Out of 5.8 billion people in the world, the majority of them are certainly not believers in Buddhism. We can't argue with them, tell them they should be believers. No! Impossible! And, realistically speaking, if the majority of humanity remain nonbelievers, it doesn't matter. No problem. The problem is that the majority have lost, or ignore, the deeper human values-compassion, a sense of responsibility. That is our big concern.

-The Dalai Lama, 1997

Analyses of others are actually expressions of our own needs and values.

-Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D.

If you resist reading what you disagree with, how will you ever acquire deeper insights into what you believe? The things most worth reading are precisely those that challenge our convictions.

-Unknown

Here is a list of qualities that many UUs might value: Loyalty; Duty; Respect; Selfless service; Honor; Integrity; Personal courage. (LDRSHIP) This is a list of Army values.

We must all learn to live together as brothers or we will all perish as fools.

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Every person is a new door to a different world.

-from Movie "Six Degrees of Separation"

QUESTIONS (Please respond to whichever question or questions you feel moved to answer. It is not necessary to respond to all of the questions. You may also respond to any of the readings that you find to be particularly meaningful.)

1. What differences do you encounter in your own or other communities that you find interesting, refreshing or enjoyable? What needs do these differences meet for you?
2. What differences in your own or other communities do you find to be challenging, uncomfortable, frustrating or distressing? What needs or values of yours are not met by these differences?
3. Share an example of a change in understanding you experienced when you viewed different beliefs or practices as strategies which people use to meet their needs.
4. The 4<sup>th</sup> UU Principle is “A free and responsible search for truth and meaning”. What has been your experience when you and others reach different conclusions?

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)

- 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)

And now we take our leave. Before we gather here again—may each of us bring happiness into another’s life; may we each be surprised by the gifts that surround us; may we each be enlivened by constant curiosity; and may we remain together in spirit, ‘til the hour we meet again.

-Barbara Cheatham

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 lesson plan, and your calendar/date book.)

Lesson plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry steering committee (Laura Adams; Dick Loescher, chair; Sandy Moses; Leora White) and Rev. Alicia Forsey 1-23-12