

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
Covenant Group Session  
**Violence, Terror, and War**  
Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist, Palatine, IL

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

### **Preliminaries**

Ask participants to please complete the survey from the Ministerial Search Committee they will receive in early May – even if they attended a focus group.

### **Chalice Lighting and Reading**

To face the world's coldness, a chalice of warmth.

To face the world's terrors, a chalice of courage.

To face the world's turmoil, a chalice of peace.

May its glow fill our spirits, our hearts, and our lives.

--unknown

### **Check-in.**

### **Transition Meditation**

Help the group move from check-in preliminaries to silence with directed deep breathing, soft words, music, or other meditative techniques.

### **Meditation Reading:**

When I despair, I remember that,  
all through history,  
the way of truth and love has always won.  
There have been tyrants and murderers,  
and for a time they can seem invincible,  
but in the end, they always fall.

Think of it. Always, they fall. Always.

--Mohandas Ghandi

## **Deep Sharing/Deep Listening**

Please remember, this forum is not for political analysis. Rather, we'll be sharing our own personal feelings and reactions to this topic.

1. What were your feelings last week in the aftermath of the Virginia Tech tragedy? Try to find the feeling words – sad, afraid, angry, numb, unaffected – and understand why you felt that way.
2. Did your feelings change in the days that followed? If so, why?
3. How do you cope with violence, terror, and war in our society? Are you doing anything special to keep your spirits up despite the difficult news each day? Do you see any positive outcomes or reasons for hope?

## **Check-out**

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

### **Reading:**

Go in peace. Live simply, gently,  
at home in yourselves.  
Act justly.  
Speak justly.  
Remember the depth of your own compassion.  
Forget not your power in the days  
of your powerlessness.

Crave peace for all people in the world,  
beginning with yourselves,  
and go as you go with the dream  
of that peace alive in your heart.

Hymnal #686 (adapted), Mark L. Belletini

**So May We Be.**

## **Preparation for CCUU Session: Violence, Terror, and War**

The recent events at Virginia Tech have once again brought us face to face with the dark side of our society. Multiple shootings at schools have become so frequent as to almost seem commonplace. The pictures and words of the media have almost lost their meaning – “massacre,” “horror,” “killer,” “insanity,” “grief,” “mourning,” “devastation.” We have become numbed to them. The analysis is endless; the answers elusive.

And is the maltreatment of our soldiers at Walter Reed and other military and VA hospitals not a form of violence? Or the endless political debate and maneuvering that produces nothing more than killed, wounded, and terrorized soldiers?

And, after all, what is the meaning of 32 people killed at a rural university compared to twice and thrice that number killed everyday in Iraq. Ten times ten that number in Darfur.

Violence, terror, and war certainly affected our society before September 11, 2001. But the context of such acts – if not the frequency and scope – has changed dramatically. Increasing levels of high anxiety, stress, hopelessness, fear – of traveling, of other people, of never being safe, of everything – are just some of the symptoms ordinary Americans are suffering from this cycle of violence.

Where does it end? How do we change the context for ourselves so that we can walk in beauty as opposed to fear? As individuals, we can choose to be helpless or hopeful.

### **Food for Thought**

We'll be talking about some of these issues in covenant at our next meeting. Please remember, this forum is not for political analysis. Rather, we'll be sharing our own personal feelings and reactions to this topic.

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2. Did your feelings change in the days that followed? If so, why?
3. How do you cope with violence, terror, and war in our society? Are you doing anything special to keep your spirits up despite the difficult news each day? Do you see any positive outcomes or reasons for hope?

## **Meditation Readings**

*--Martin Luther King, Jr. "Where Do We Go From Here?" August, 1967*

Through violence you may murder a murderer,  
*but you can't murder murder.*

Through violence you may murder a liar,  
*but you can't establish truth.*

Through violence you may murder a hater,  
*but you can't murder hate.*

Darkness cannot put out darkness.  
*Only light can do that....*

Difficult and painful as it is, we must walk on in the days ahead  
*with an audacious faith in the future.*

When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds of despair,  
and when our nights become darker than a  
thousand midnights,

*let us remember that there is a creative force  
in this universe,  
working to pull down the gigantic mountains  
of evil,*

a power that is able to make a way out of no way  
and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows.

*Let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long,  
but it bends toward justice.*

*Sequence for the Day: A Prayer for Peace*  
*Mark L. Belletini, on the beginning of the Iraq War*  
*First UU Church of Columbus, Ohio*

O Love,  
you who struggle so to hold me close  
even on the days when I peevishly push you away,  
I just have one question today:  
so why not some peace for a change?  
You know, peace.  
No dying children.  
No houses burned to the ground.  
No bullets.  
The guns melted and made into jewelry  
or doll frames,  
the hollow missiles used for grain silos.  
Peace. You know.  
No one posturing, blaming,  
describing who's at fault for a hundred years,  
or a thousand, no one shouting,  
or galloping smugly on steeds of righteousness  
while they trample kids with cruel hunger  
in one place, explosions in another.  
Peace. You know. No one claiming that Adonai  
blesses bayonets, or that Jesus has been misunderstood all these years and that  
what he really said was: "Blow up your enemies."

Peace. A simple word. A roof over your head.  
Some love and kindness. A satisfying meal.  
A poem read by candlelight. Sommersaults  
in a green park. Laughter. Tenderness at the hour of death. Music. Peace. You  
know.

And so, amidst all the noise, the shouting, the horror,  
the terror... offer us, right oh Love, a gate,  
a gate crafted from blocks of deliberate silence.  
And bricks of simple grief.  
And ordinary tenderness.  
And vulnerability.  
Invite us, oh Love, now, at last,  
to enter through this gate and find a meadow there,  
bright and sweet. Bid us lie down for a time there,  
amid the fragrant field grass, remember the real love we have known in our  
lives, person by person, and in that silent meadow, in that remembering,  
in that recommitment to you, o Love, grant us peace.

Stephanie Certain Matz, Countryside UU, 4/06, adapted from FUCSJ (San Jose)