

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SMALL GROUP MINISTRY NETWORK WEBSITE  
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

**Welcoming as Spiritual Practice**  
Northern New England District, Rev. David Chandler

**Opening Words** (please read these aloud):

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his holy place? There is no one but us. There is no one to send, nor a clean hand, nor a pure heart on the face of the earth, nor in the earth, but only us, a generation comforting ourselves with the notion that we have come at an awkward time, that our innocent fathers are all dead – as if innocence had ever been – and our children busy and troubled, and we ourselves unfit, not yet ready, having each of us chosen wrongly, made a false start, failed, yielded to impulse and the tangled comfort of pleasures, and grown exhausted, unable to seek the thread, weak, and involved.

But there is no one but us. There never has been.

– Annie Dillard, from Holy the Firm

**Check-in** (please take two minutes each):

You are invited to share any cares or concerns or anything about you at this moment. Please do not interrupt or respond to others. Please affirm confidentiality in this group.

**Topical Questions** (please consider and discuss):

What spiritualities feel “welcome” in your congregation? (e.g. – Christianity, atheism, Humanism, Buddhism, earth-based, etc.)

What practices affirm these spiritualities? (e.g. – music, readings, sermons, prayer or meditation, observance of holidays, rituals)

How might welcoming more BGLTQ people enrich your congregation’s spiritual practices?

What about your own spiritual life?

“There is no one but us” – how does that affect in a spiritual way your welcome of BGLTQ people? What about Republicans? What about BGLTQ Republicans?

**Closing Words** (please read these aloud):

We clasp the hands of those that go before us, and the hands of those who come after us.

We enter the circle of each other’s arms and the larger circle of lovers,  
whose hands are joined in a dance,

And the larger circle of all creatures, passing in and out of life,

Who move also in a dance, to a music so subtle and vast that no ear hears it

Except in fragments.

– Wendell Berry, “The Larger Circle”

**Check-out** (please take two minutes each):

How did this session go for you? Did it help you stretch your understanding or better share your experiences and insights? Do you feel more welcoming?

Rev. David Chandler, Saco-Biddeford, for the Welcoming Congregation Conference Nov.2007.