

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry network Website
SMALL GROUP SESSION
WHAT DO I BELIEVE ABOUT OTHERS?
By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

How did the rose
Ever open its heart

And give to this world
All its beauty?

It felt the encouragement of light
Against its Being.

Otherwise, we all remain
Too frightened.

Hafiz

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health, cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining, general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: What Do I Believe About Others?

We have a great need to rely on the fact of human goodness. Goodness seems like an outrageous “fact.” In these dark times we are confronted daily with mounting evidence of the great harm we do so easily to one another. We are numbed by frequent genocide, ethnic hatred, and acts of violence committed daily in the world. In self-protective groups, we terrorize each other with our hatred. Of the 240 plus nations in the world, nearly 1/4th of them are at war.

In our daily life, we encounter people who are angry, deceitful, intent only on satisfying their own needs. There is so much anger, distrust, greed, and pettiness that we are losing our capacity to work well together.... Yet this incessant display of the worst in us makes it essential that we rely on human goodness. Without that belief in each other, there really is no hope.

There is nothing equal to human creativity, human caring, human will. We can be incredibly generous, imaginative, and openhearted. We can do the impossible, learn and change quickly, and extend instant compassion to those in distress. And these are not behaviors we keep hidden. We exhibit them daily.

Asking us to notice if we believe in human goodness is not a philosophical question. We will either retreat or move closer together, depending on what we believe about each other. Courageous acts aren't done by people who believe in human badness. Why risk anything if we don't believe in each other? Why stand up for anyone if we don't believe they're worth saving? Who I think you are will determine what I'm willing to do on your behalf. If I believe you're not as good or important as me, I won't even notice you.

Oppression never occurs between equals. Tyranny starts with the belief that some people are more human than others.

We can help one another by trusting that others, too, are fully human. And then we can invite them to step forward with their goodness.... A hopeful future is possible. We can't get there alone, we can't get there without each other, and we can't create it without relying as never before on our fundamental and precious human goodness.

(from Turning to One Another - Margaret Wheatley)

Discussion:

What is your belief about "the goodness in others?"

Cite examples, from your life, when you experienced "goodness."

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you'd like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS: (same as Opening Words - Hafiz)