

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Small Group Ministry Session Plan

"WINTER REFLECTIONS"

First Universalist Church, Unitarian Universalist, Auburn, ME, Rev. Glenn Turner, January 2019

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

“Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home.” — **Edith Sitwell**

"Winter is a season of recovery and preparation." - **Paul Theroux**

“That’s what winter is: an exercise in remembering how to still yourself, then how to come pliantly back to life again.” — **Ali Smith**

MOMENTS OF SILENT REFLECTION

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

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

FOCUS: “WINTER REFLECTIONS”

There’s the saying: “Between a rock and a hard place.” In Winter, we’re literally between bitter cold and heavy snow. So many memories of winters past, and the temperature plummets each night now and some twenty inches of snow is the weekend forecast. I remember... I remember the designs left by Jack Frost on my bedroom windows some seventy years ago. I remember snow tunnels, sledding, cold wet socks, freezing fingers. Experiences of joy. We can turn it into great phrases: “In the midst of winter, I discovered in me an invincible summer.” We can look up at the sky, prone from a slip on the ice. Or remember the sharp pang of pain in our backs following that shovelful of snow. There are chickadees and “snow-birds.” And, whatever comes to mind when we reflect on winter...

READINGS:

The country is more of a wilderness, more of a wild solitude, in the winter than in the summer. The wild comes out. The urban, the cultivated, is hidden or negated. - **John Burroughs**

“No animal, according to the rules of animal-etiquette, is ever expected to do anything strenuous, or heroic, or even moderately active during the off-season of winter.” — **Kenneth Grahame, The Wind in the Willows**

"Maine is a joy in the Summer, but the soul of Maine is more apparent in the Winter." - **Paul Theroux**

“I dont hate it he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark; I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!” — **William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom!**

"The hard soil and four months of snow make the inhabitants of the northern temperate zone wiser and abler than his fellow who enjoys the fixed smile of the tropics. “ --**Ralph Waldo Emerson**

“Snowflakes swirl down gently in the deep blue haze beyond the window. The outside world is a dream.

Inside, the fireplace is brightly lit, and the Yule log crackles with orange and crimson sparks.

There’s a steaming mug in your hands, warming your fingers.

There’s a friend seated across from you in the cozy chair, warming your heart.

There is mystery unfolding.” — Vera Nazarian, The Perpetual Calendar of

Inspiration

"Snow was falling,
so much like stars
filling the dark trees
that one could easily imagine
its reason for being was nothing more
than prettiness.”

— Mary Oliver

“I do an awful lot of thinking and dreaming about things in the past and the future - the timelessness of the rocks and the hills - all the people who have existed there. I prefer winter and fall, when you feel the bone structure of the landscape - the loneliness of it, the dead feeling of winter. Something waits beneath it, the whole story doesn't show.”

— Andrew Wyeth

Zero Holding

"I grow to like the bare
trees and the snow, the bones and fur
of winter. Even the greyness
of the nunneries, they are so grey,
walled all around with grey stones—
and the snow piled up on ledges
of wall and sill, those grey
planes for holding snow: this is how
it will be, months now, all so still,
sunk in itself, only the cold alive,
vibrant, like a wire—and all the
busy chimneys—their ghost-breath,
a rumour of lives warmed within,
rising, rising, and blowing away.”

— Robyn Sarah, The Touchstone: New and Selected Poems

DISCUSSION:

So, what is it about winter that warms your heart or chills your bones? What we share now can encompass anything from memories to reflections.

LIKES, WISHES, NEW BUSINESS, DATES

CLOSING WORDS:

Brew me a cup for a winter’s night.
For the wind howls loud, and the furies fight;
Spice it with love and stir it with care,
And I’ll toast your bright eyes, my sweetheart fair.

~Minna Thomas Antrim, "A Night Cap"