

Our UU Principles

UU Community Church of Santa Monica

Heart to Heart Circles

September 2016

Some materials in this session adapted from Small Group Ministry of Eugene, Oregon

Welcome and Explanations

Chalice Lighting

Sharing Silence 3 minutes

You may wish to bring your attention to your breath, or move a bit until you have found a comfortable seat. If silence is not a familiar experience to you, three minutes may seem long. If you are accustomed to silence, it may seem short.

On Our Hearts 15 minutes

This is a time to share wonderful news or a heavy heart - the major highs and lows of your life you'd like everyone to keep in their hearts or in their prayers for you.

Covenant and Ground Rules

Our covenant includes a description of how we want to be with each other, ground rules for our time together, and our expectations for members of the group. This covenant is adapted from *Heart to Heart: Fourteen Gatherings for Reflection and Sharing* by Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins.

I commit myself:

- to give attendance at meetings a real priority knowing that my presence is important to the group;
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit;
- to participate with my group in two service projects, one for our church community, and one for the wider community;
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others;
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others;
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart;
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, problem solving, or giving advice;
- and to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

Housekeeping

Readings

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person.

Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.

The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

I have gone to a lot of church services in my time. When I was eight, wearing Mary Jane shoes and white stockings... We colored in our bulletins and we looked through the hymnals and made ourselves giggle by adding "between the sheets" to their titles. A Baptist friend says she and her friends added "in the bathtub." "Turn Back, O Man," between the sheets. "We Three Kings of Orient Are" in the bathtub...Years ago I came into this Unitarian Universalist community of faith. I'm home. I listen to people talk sometimes about liberal religion as if it's a thin gruel, watered down to please everyone. Our Seven Principles, they complain, are either too much like a creed or so general as to be meaningless.

My experience of the Principles is that they are deeply demanding...For those who feel they are thin gruel, I have a suggestion. Let's stick something onto the end of every Principle that will stop people from smiling and nodding comfortably as they are read. Instead of adding "in the bathtub" or "between the sheets," how about attaching "beginning in our homes and congregations"?..."Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations, beginning in our homes and congregations" is a sobering ideal... Some of the nastiest behavior I've seen was long ago at a community workshop for peace activists.

Lao Tse, quoted in the back of our hymn book, says peace in the world begins with peace in the home, which begins with peace in the heart. If I start with my own heart, the demands of our Principles get even heavier. Peace and compassion in my heart? Justice too? Freedom as well? Affirming the worth of every person all the time, not only with my words and my behavior but in my secret heart?

...For me, the heart of the liberal faith is to be connected to something greater than yourself; to wallow in the Spirit of Life, Love, and Truth;... to move toward being in right relationship with ourselves, one another, and the planet.

For me, this faith isn't a thin gruel. It's not even a rich and hearty gruel. It's walnuts and bananas, pancakes, mangoes, arugula, ginger, and avocado. The feast is prepared with effort, enjoyment, persistence, and commitment. Care to join me?

Meg Barnhouse, UU minister

Questions for consideration

1. Which of our UU Principles particularly resonate with you?
2. What other principles or values are important to you?
3. Share about times when it has been challenging to follow principles or values that are important to you.
4. How are our UU principles important to your spiritual life? Is there anything you wish you could add or take away from our UU principles?

Sharing 60 minutes

Reflecting on Our Time Together

Please share anything that would otherwise be unsaid as you leave our time together. Do you wish you had shared something more, less, different? How are you feeling as you leave? Feeling words are ok, such as sad, mad, glad, peaceful, powerful, joyful.

Closing Words

There are ultimately only two possible adjustments to life: one is to suit our lives to principles; the other is to suit principles to our lives. If we do not live as we think, we soon begin to think as we live.

-Fulton J. Sheen, American Catholic bishop