

"Thank You for Your Loving Hands"

Thank you for your loving hands, your loving heart, your loving ways—
Thank you for the gifts you bring into the world each day.
And if you ever doubt yourself, remember us, who love you well—
we know all the gifts you bring into the world each day.
So thank you for your loving hands, your loving heart, your loving ways,
Thank you for the gifts you bring into the world each day.
—by Judy Fjell and Lisa Bregger

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to honor the group by letting the leader know if I will be absent, and to come to the group one last time and say good-bye if I need to quit
- to avoid cross talk, giving feedback or trying to fix anyone
- 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 not tell other people's stories
- to listen to what others share with an open heart, and to share deeply in my turn

Covenant Groups

Humor



A clown is like an aspirin, only he works twice as fast.
—Groucho Marx

Humor

Chalice Lighting

Enter with me the sacred space.

Bring with you what is yours—

a burdened heart, a joyous song,

a wearied spirit, a seeking mind.

Bring the gift of yourself to the altar.

It is an honorable gift.

—Amerette Calloway

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Silence

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Readings

A person without a sense of humor is like a wagon without springs. It's jolted by every pebble on the road.

—Henry Ward Beecher

Humor brings insight and tolerance. Irony brings a deeper and less friendly understanding.

—Agnes Repplier

Imagination was given to man to compensate him for what he is not; a sense of humor to console him for what he is.

—Francis Bacon

A well-developed sense of humor is the pole that adds balance to your steps as you walk the tightrope of life.

—William Arthur Ward

One can't express aggression and sexual drive directly, as it is prohibited in the society, so these desires get sublimated in telling "jokes." If you look at jokes, they are either about somebody getting hurt, or they have sexual connotations.

—Sigmund Freud

Humor, more than anything else in the human makeup, affords an aloofness and an ability to rise above any situation, even if only for a few seconds.

—Victor Frankl

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening

So what do we do in a circle of trust? . . . we speak our own truth; we listen receptively to the truth of others; we ask each other honest, open questions instead of giving counsel; and we offer each other the healing and empowering gifts of silence and laughter.

—Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*

Round 1: Read a joke from the basket, and tell whether you think it is funny or not and why that is.

Round 2: When is humor not appropriate? Why? Describe a time in your life that humor enabled you to cope with a difficult situation.

Round 3: Make a connection to something that was shared by another participant.

Closing Words

When humor goes, there goes civilization.

—Erma Bombeck

Closing Song

"Thank You for Your Loving Hands"

Group Business

Homework for the next meeting.

Homework: Humor

Humor is an important ingredient for good mental health. It helps us to connect with others, reduces stress by helping us view the world with perspective, and replaces distressing emotions with pleasurable feelings.

We may define humor several ways:

- **Humor is the experience of incongruity.** In one's environment the incongruity may be experienced when someone falls down in a situation when they are not expected to fall down, or the incongruity can be between concepts, thoughts, or ideas often illustrated by the punch line of a joke or the caption of a cartoon.
- **"Humor is emotional chaos remembered in tranquility,"** states James Thurber. An event wasn't funny at the time, but later with distance we can appreciate the humor. This occurs frequently when people are experiencing a crisis, and at some later time the crisis situation is perceived as humorous.
- **Humor is the joy of "getting" it.** Humor can be the understanding of something that we at first did not comprehend. This occurs every day in misunderstandings at which we laugh.

Laughter is the physiological response to humor, and research has shown that:

- Laughter reduces serum cortisol (a hormone released during the stress response).
- Laughter increases immunoglobulin A (an antibody that helps fight upper respiratory disease).
- Laughter increases tolerance to pain.
- Laughter increases heart rate and pulse rate, and it "juggles" the internal organs.

I would never have made it if I could not have laughed. Laughing lifted me momentarily . . . out of this horrible situation, just enough to make it livable . . . survivable.

—Victor Frankl

The simple truth is that happy people generally don't get sick.

—Bernie Siegel, MD

Humor is . . . despair refusing to take itself seriously.

—Arland Ussher

Humor is the great thing, the saving thing. The minute it crops up, all our irritation and resentments slip away, and a sunny spirit takes their place.

—Mark Twain

The kind of humor I like is the thing that makes me laugh for five seconds and think for ten minutes.

—William Davis

Read the following Unitarian Universalist jokes. Which ones made you laugh and why? Did you find any offensive? Why?

Hearing that a great flood was coming, Roman Catholics prayed their rosaries, Methodists joined in prayer, but UUs formed a class to try to learn to live under water.

Three children were talking about their religions. "I'm a Catholic," said one, "and our symbol is the cross." "I'm Jewish," said the second, "and our symbol is the Star of David." The third child said, "I'm a Unitarian Universalist and our symbol is a candle in a cocktail glass!"

Did you hear about the insomniac dyslexic Unitarian?
She stayed awake all night wondering if there really was a Dog.

Have you heard the latest UU miracle?
Someone saw the face of Ralph Waldo Emerson on a tortilla.

How many Unitarians does it take to change a light bulb?
There is no fixed number, but the committee must have a quorum.

Religious Holy Books:
Judaism—The Torah
Islam—The Koran
Christianity—The Bible
Unitarian Universalism—Roberts' Rules of Order

Why are UUs the worst hymn singers?
Because they are always reading ahead to see if they agree with the next line.

What is the meaning of Easter for UUs?
Easter is when Jesus comes out of his tomb, and if he sees his shadow he goes back in and we get six more weeks of winter.

What do you get when you cross a Unitarian Universalist with a Jehovah's Witness?
Someone who knocks on your door and asks you what you believe.

What two things do UUs and Dracula have in common?
They both have origins in Transylvania, and they both shy away from the cross.

Things to Ponder

- Describe a time in your life when humor enabled you to cope with a difficult situation.
- What is one of your favorite jokes or stories? What makes it so funny?
- When was the last time you really laughed at something? Is it still funny when you think about it?
- When is humor not appropriate? Why?

Leader's Guide: Humor

This session focuses on humor and its importance in our lives.

Please note: You need to cut the jokes apart (found in the homework), fold them in half, and place them in a basket for Round 1.

Chalice Lighting (2 min)

Ask someone to read the chalice lighting reading found in the bulletin.

Enter with me the sacred space.
Bring with you what is yours—
 a burdened heart, a joyous song,
 a wearied spirit, a seeking mind.
Bring the gift of yourself to the altar.
It is an honorable gift.
—Amerette Calloway

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows (10 min)

Ask group members to tell in one or two sentences how they are today. Share information about absent members.

Silence (3 min)

Give your group the gift of three minutes of silence. Time it!

Shared Readings (5 min)

Go around your group, letting each person in turn read from the shared readings found in the bulletin until all the readings are finished.

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening (65 min)

Read the quote about deep listening in the bulletin. Do your rounds of deep sharing/deep listening. Pay close attention to the time allotted each person to ensure all get to share at least once.

Round 1 (10 min): Let each member choose a joke out of the basket and read it aloud. Then they can explain whether they think it is funny or not and why that is.

Round 2 (40 min): When is humor not appropriate and why? Describe a moment in your life when humor enabled you to get through a difficult situation.

Round 3 (15 min): Talk about new insights you have had about humor as you listened to others speak about it.

Closing Words (1 min)

When humor goes, there goes civilization.
—Erma Bombeck

Closing Song (1 min)

Sing "Thank You for Your Loving Hands."

Group Business (5 min)

Pass out the homework for next time.