

Faith

Chalice Lighting

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Readings

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Discussion, if time

Group Business

Closing Words and Song "Go Now in Peace"

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

During this time, one person speaks at a time, into an appreciative silence. The only response to the speaker is non-verbal, although the leader may express thanks if that seems comfortable. There is a brief moment of silence between speakers so that we can let the sharing "sink in." Then the next person shares. This may seem awkward or unsupportive at first, but most groups find it very satisfying once they get used to it.

The one who is sharing has the job of speaking deeply from their heart about the topic at hand.

Listeners have the task of keeping an open heart to what is shared.

The next speaker has the task of leaving some space before they speak.

The leader is responsible for helping speakers remember the time frame they have to speak in.

The speaking may go in any order. It is assumed that everyone in the group will speak, but if someone does not want to speak, they may pass.

In a second "round" everyone who wishes to add second thoughts or thoughts sparked by what was shared may do so. It is not appropriate to ask questions about what someone else shared, only to reflect on what the sharing sparked in oneself. Once again, there should be a bit of silence between speakers.

If everyone has had a chance to speak a second time and there is time remaining, there may be a more conversational time. Those who are speaking should be aware of whether others wish to speak. Once again, the focus should be on what you are thinking and feeling, rather than probing others or attempting to solve problems for them.

Go Now in Peace 413

$\text{♩} = 52$

①
Go now in peace. Go now in peace.

②
May the love of God sur-round you ev-ery-where,

③
ev-ery-where you may go.

④

Words & music: Natalie Sleeth, 1930 , based on Luke 2:29,
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GO IN PEACE
Irregular

Covenant Groups

Faith



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 goodbye if I need to quit.
- 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.

Homework for the Next Session

Faith

"After long years of seeking certainty about things that cannot be seen, I have pretty much surrendered to the necessity of faith- that love will last, that goodness has power, that God is real. I cannot lay my hands on any of those things" ..-Barbara Brown Taylor

1. Most UU's have struggled with the doctrines of the religious traditions of our childhood or society and have decided against the virgin birth, resurrection, hell, and so on. Let's dig deeper than that in this discussion and ask about more fundamental issues, such as Barbara Brown Taylor's above, or Is there something we are "supposed" to be doing? Is there existence for us after death? Will things "turn out ok in the long run"? Are people basically good and trustworthy? What answers to you give to these questions, and why?
2. By definition, questions of faith have answers that can't be proven, and we must make choices and take actions anyway. Think back on some of the choice points of your life and see if you can identify the basics of your faith.
3. The word, 'Credo' is related to the word for heart, and could be translated, "I stake my heart on...." rather than the more usual, "I believe". Try to write a few "credo" statements.

leader's guide: Faith

Cut apart the following poems and quotations, and let people look them over and select one as they come in to read aloud in the “shared readings” time.

Begin in your usual way: Chalice lighting, joys and concerns, and silence.

Ask people to read, keeping some silence between the readings.

Do your rounds of sharing and close by re-reading one of these readings...choose your favorite!

In our life of faith as well as in our most intimate relationships with other people, our task is to transform the high romance of conversion, the fervor of a religious call, into daily commitment. Into the sort of friendship that transcends infatuation and can endure all things. Our desire is to love God and each other, in stable relationships that, like any good marriage, remain open to surprises and receptive to grace. Kathleen Norris *The Quotidian Mysteries*.

Woody Allen's classic joke from *Sleeper*: "I'm a teleological existential agnostic...I believe there's an intelligence that governs the universe--with the exception of certain parts of New Jersey."

“faith is not so much a binary pole as a quantum state, which tends to indeterminacy when closely examined. At the end of the millennium, and of a century that has the Holocaust at its center, the reasons for doubt in God’s existence are so easily come by—His invisibility, his apparent indifference to the torrents of pain and cruelty that history books and the news media report, the persuasive explanations that science offers for almost all phenomena once thought mysterious—that church attendance must be taken ...as a willful decision to evade that G.K. Chesterton called “atheist respectability.”” -John Updike, *New Yorker*, 11/29/99

Religion, n. A daughter of Hope and Fear, explaining to Ignorance the nature of the Unknown. A. Bierce.

Lie back daughter, let your head
be tipped back in the cup of my hand.
Gently, and I will hold you. Spread
your arms wide, lie out on the stream
and look high at the gulls. A dead-
man's float is face down. You will dive
and swim soon enough where this tidewater
ebbs to the sea. Daughter, believe
me, when you tire on the long thrash
to your island, lie up, and survive.
As you float now, where I held you
and let go, remember when fear
cramps your heart what I told you:
lie gently and wide to the light-year
stars, lie back, and the sea will hold you.
Philip Booth

Great ideas, it has been said
Come into the world as quietly as doves
Perhaps then, if we listen attentively
We shall hear, amid the uproars of
Empires and nations-
A faint flutter of wings, the gentle stirring of life and hope.
Some say this hope lies in a nation; others, in a man,

I believe rather that it is awakened, received, nourished by
Millions of solitary individuals whose deeds and works
Everyday negate the frontiers and the crudest implications
Of history.
As a result. There shines forth fleetingly the ever-threatened truth,
That each and every man, on the foundations of his own sufferings
And joys, builds for us all A. Camus

Crossing a creek requires three things:
A certain serenity of mind, bare feet,
And a sure trust
That the snake we know
Slides silently underwater
Just beyond our vision
Will choose to ignore
The flesh
That cuts through its territory,
And we will pass through.

Some people think crossing a creek
Is easy,
But I say this--
All crossings are hard,
Whether creeks, mountains,
Or into other lives.
And we must always believe
In the snakes at our feet
Just out of our vision
And we must practice believing
We will come through. -by Martha Courtot