

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 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 avoid cross talk, giving feedback or trying to fix anyone
- 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



EXCLUSION

INCLUSION/EXCLUSION

Chalice Lighting

This is the mission of our faith:

To teach the fragile art of hospitality;

To revere both the critical mind and the generous heart;

To prove that diversity need not mean divisiveness;

And to witness to all that we must hold the whole world in our hands.

-William Schulz

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Readings

Gender is not a category upon which we should (or can) judge people's worth. Not only because that kind of prejudice is wrong, but because gender itself is fluid.

-Rev. Sean Parker Dennison

...our theology, our faith, calls us to a standard higher than tolerance. Affirming the inherent worth and dignity of every person, even those who make us uncomfortable, calls us to examine our assumptions, to recognize our prejudices and preconceptions, to gather information we need, and to move into honest relationship with "the other." Our goal is to live as one human family on this small blue planet. We have much to be proud of. But our work is not done.

-Rev. William G. Sinkford

...any time we discriminate against anyone and any time we allow crude jokes or bigoted actions on the part of others to occur, we have betrayed our own selves.

-Rev. Elizabeth McMaster

The test of courage comes when we are in the minority. The test of tolerance comes when we are in the majority.

-Ralph W. Sockman

We dare not forget that inclusion, not exclusion, is the way of grace.

-Denise Ackerman

He drew a circle that shut me out –

Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.

But Love and I had the wit to win:

We drew a circle that took him in.

-Edwin Markham

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round I

Using the circle on the front of the bulletin to represent your family, draw an x for yourself and other members. Who is at the core? Who is on the outskirts? Who is outside of the circle? In one sentence, tell something you learned from drawing the circle.

Round II

Referring to your homework, tell a story about an instance of exclusion or inclusion from your life. This could be about something that happened to you or something you witnessed.

Round III

What from this session was most meaningful to you?

Closing Words

Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty.

-Mother Teresa

Song "Go Now in Peace"

Group Business

Leader's Notes for Inclusion/Exclusion

Preparations or any special instructions:

You will need pens or pencils for each group member. This session examines the experience of being included or excluded in family, work, or social groups and begins with an exercise (placing x's in or outside the circle on the bulletin cover to represent family inclusion/exclusion). Most of us have had some sort of experience with being excluded, ranging from overt rejection in a family setting to workplace discrimination to a subtle sense that we are not welcome in a social setting. We have also had the benefit of being welcome and being part of a group, be it family, friends, sports teams, or a church. The homework for this session lists a great many questions which attempt to bring up memories and feelings about inclusion and exclusion. To get the ball rolling, be sure to have your own stories ready to tell.

Chalice Lighting: A Chalice Lighting reading is provided. You may read it yourself or ask a member of your covenant group to read.

Sharing of Joys and Concerns: (10 min)

Silence: (3 min) Give your group the gift of three minutes of silence.

Shared Readings: (5 min) Ask one of the group members to begin the readings, then have them take turns around the room.

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening:

Round I (15 min) Read the following exercise to your group members: *Using the circle on the front of the bulletin to represent your family, draw an x for yourself and other members. Who is at the core? Who is on the outskirts? Who is outside of the circle? In one sentence, tell something you learned from drawing the circle.*

Round II (40 min) Please have a copy or two of the homework available in case someone has left his/her copy at home. Read the following to your group members: *Referring to your homework, tell a story about an instance of exclusion or inclusion from your life. This could be about something that happened to you or something you witnessed.*

Round III (15 min) This is the group's opportunity to share any meaningful lessons from the session, to expand on something brought up in Round II, or to ask questions of each other.

Closing ritual or Closing Words: (1 min) Read the closing words: *Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty. --Mother Teresa*

Sing: (2 min) Go Now in Peace

Group Business: (5 min) Pass out Q and Q (homework) for next time.

Inclusion/Exclusion

We believe that each and every person is important.
We affirm and promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.
We believe that all people should be treated fairly.
We affirm and promote acceptance of one another...”

*Reading #594, Singing the Living Tradition
Adapted from the Unitarian Universalist Association
Principles and Purposes*

The words above illustrate values that many of us share. These words also suggest what could be achieved in a world where everyone is included in family, community, and work life and none are excluded. But we know that the world we live in is not like that. We know that people face exclusion in their families, in our communities, and in our places of employment because of race, gender, sexual preference, age, economic status, religion, disability, personal history, or even political point of view.

This session is about your experience with inclusion and exclusion. There are a large number of questions offered in this session’s homework. You do not have to address each of them. Choose those which have the most meaning for you.

1. Think of a time when you felt unwelcome. How did you handle the circumstances? What was your view of the group that made you feel unwelcome?
2. If you have ever noticed someone who appeared to be feeling unwelcome, how did you feel and what did you do?
3. Do you believe that people who feel comfortable with themselves are more welcoming to those who are very different from them? Why or why not?
4. In what groups have you felt most comfortable with yourself? Why do you think you were?
5. In what groups have you felt the least comfortable with yourself? Why do you think you were?
6. What is your personal history with inclusion and exclusion? Did you grow up in a family with biases against certain groups? Did you assume those biases into your own view of the world? If not, when and how did you separate from your family’s views?
7. If you have heard offensive jokes about people or negative generalizations made about groups, how have you handled the situation? What did it feel like to speak up or stay silent? If the jokes or generalizations were about a group you belong to, how did you feel?
8. How has your background denied or opened opportunities for you?

Live together, talk together, walk together. We are all One.

--Swami Satyananda