

Bulletin for Connecting

As you arrive . . .

- Check the list of names, phone numbers, and emails to make sure yours are correct.
- Make an adhesive name tag with your name.
- Use an index card to make a **Name-Info** card with this information. There should be an example on the table:

Center: The name you wish to be called.

Upper Left: A group that is important to you.

Upper Right: An activity that makes you feel connected.

Lower Left: A place that means a lot to you.

Lower Right: A person such as a musician, author, poet, artist, social activist or scientist whose work has meaning for you.

Chalice Lighting

Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words but pouring them all right out—just as they are—chaff and grain together, certain that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping—and with the breath of kindness, blow the rest away.

Dinah Marie Mullock Craik

Introductions

Group members introduce themselves using the information written on their cards.

Silence

Group Business

The facilitator explains the basic organization of covenant groups, including the following:

- There are 14 sessions, each lasting an hour and a half to two hours.
- Covenant Group materials can be found on the new, changed church website. From the new UUABQ.com home page, choose the Connect menu, then Covenant Groups, then 2015-16 Materials. Are members ok with printing copies?
- Each person says what he or she hopes to get out of being in a covenant group. The group then discusses how to be inclusive, especially if some members already know each other.

The Covenant

The group reads, discusses, and commits to the Covenant, which can be found on the last page.

Shared Readings

We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results. *Herman Melville*

When we are with Nature we are awake, and we discover many interesting things and reach many a mark we are not aiming at. *John Muir*

It is not accidental that all phenomena of human life are dominated by the search for daily bread—the oldest link connection all living things, man included, with the surrounding nature. *Ivan Pavlov*

Society is the soul writ large. *Plato*

In the Buddhist tradition, our connections are real; our separations are an illusion. . . . If you and I are ultimately connected, you cannot be other. You cannot be an alien, a foreigner. If I do not know you I do not yet know a part of my self. When you and I are separated, neither of us is whole. *Peter Morales*

Introducing Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Members will go around the circle, each reading a paragraph in the following exploration of deep sharing and deep listening.

In a talk on “Living Together in Harmony,” Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh (pronounced “Tik Nyat Hawn”) discusses deep listening. Here are his words.

We have begun to learn about a method of deep listening. As we already know, we have to practice before we can listen deeply.

Sometimes we can also translate “deep listening” as compassionate listening, that is, to listen with compassion, or to listen with love.

We hear with one aim only; we don’t listen in order to criticize, to blame, to correct the person who is speaking or to condemn the person. We only listen with one aim, and that is to relieve the suffering of the one we are listening to.

We have to sit still, we have to sit with inner freedom, and we have to be one hundred percent present, body and mind, listening so the other can relieve his or her suffering. . . .

If we can sit for an hour, that is a golden hour. That hour is an hour which can heal and transform.
Thich Nhat Hanh

Our approach to Covenant Groups uses three rounds of sharing.

Round 1 The facilitator will pose a question related to the topic, and everyone has an opportunity to respond briefly.

Round 2 Each person can speak about how you felt about the topic, a way you grew, something that touched you in the preparation materials, a story you want to share.

Round 3 As time allows, share additional thoughts on the topic or reflect on what others have shared.

During the sharing, one person speaks at a time, into an appreciative silence. The only responses are nonverbal, although members may express thanks if that seems comfortable. A brief moment of silence between speakers lets the sharing “sink in.” Then, going in any order, the next person will share. This may seem awkward 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. Listeners have the task of keeping an open heart to what is shared. The facilitator is responsible for helping speakers stay in their allotted time. It is assumed that everyone in the group will speak, but if someone does not want to speak, they may pass.

Deep Sharing and Deep Listening Round

Round 1

Share the connections on the mind map you made. Did you discover anything new about what links are most important in your life?

Rounds 2 and 3 will be skipped for this session because of the time necessary for business and explanations.

Closing Words (In Unison)

May we be reminded here of our highest aspiration.
And inspired to bring our gifts of love and service to the altar of humanity.

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings
But connected, in mystery and miracle, to the universe,
To this community and to each other.

Anonymous (#434 in Hymnal)

Song or Chime

The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group
- to let the facilitator know if I will be absent or need to quit
- to share with the facilitator the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others
- to do the reading and thinking about the topic ahead of time
- 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, or giving advice
- to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.