



A Community of Stories

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville, SC

Covenant Group Session Plan

Adapted by Jennifer Lathrop from UUCA Time to Write

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Welcome, Chalice Lighting: Let our sharing together provide a place where memories are rooted, where mysteries are pondered, where dreams are nourished, where love is freely given, where failures are owned and accepted, where sorrows are transformed, where our lives are deepened, challenged and uplifted and where we can share the gift of laughter. Let this be such a time and place.

~Adapted from Rev. David E. Bumbaugh

Check In: Share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

Opening Reading:

Hidden in all stories is the One story. The more we listen, the clearer that Story becomes. Our true identity, who we are, why we are here, what sustains us, is in this story. The stories at every kitchen table are about the same things, stories of owning, having and losing, stories of sex, of power, of pain, of wounding, of courage, hope and healing, of loneliness and the end of loneliness. Stories about God. In telling them, we are telling each other the human story. ~ *Rachel Naomi Remen, Kitchen Table Wisdom*

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What current cultural “story” strikes you as dangerous? How might you step up your commitment and efforts to challenge that dangerously false story?
2. Where have you heard only a single story about a person, country, or group? What beliefs did this inspire and how can you expand the stories you hear?
3. How can you use narratives and storytelling as an inclusion strategy?

Silence

Readings – see below

Sharing - Deep listening--no cross talk. Everyone has a chance to speak once before anyone speaks twice. Each person shares as he or she feels ready, and it is OK to pass. When others speak, do not respond with words. Attentive body language, listening deeply and accepting what they are saying without thinking how you want to react are ways to honor our covenant to each other.

Break

Open Discussion: During this time, everyone shares freely, enlarging on and reacting to others’ ideas. However, be careful not to interrupt or finish people’s sentences.

Check out: As we close today, how do you want to expand the stories you hear?

Closing reading:

Research consistently shows that stories mold us. The more deeply we are cast under a story's spell, the more potent its influence. In fact, fiction seems to be more effective at changing beliefs than nonfiction, which is designed to persuade through argument and evidence. Studies show that when we read nonfiction, we read with our shields up. We are critical and skeptical. But when we are absorbed in a story, we drop our intellectual guard. We are moved emotionally, and this seems to make us open to seeing each other and life anew.

~ *David Zahl*

Announcements/Plans

Extinguish the Chalice

Readings

Listening is soul work. It can help the living find the meaning to go on in the midst of trying circumstances, and it can help the dying accept the brevity of their lives. Without listening, there can be no story. And without stories, we cannot complete the unfinished work of healing. ~ *Richard Stone, [The Healing Art of Storytelling](#)*

Show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become... Power is the ability to not only tell the story of another person but make it the definitive story of that person.

~ Chimamanda Adichie [Video: The Danger of a Single Story](#),

https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en

The truth about stories is that that is all we are.

~ *Thomas King, [The Truth About Stories](#)*

Those who tell the stories, rule the world.

~ *Hopi Proverb*

If you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do it is to tell their story, and to start with, "secondly".

~Mourid Barghouti

Storytelling is dangerous to those who profit from the way things are because it has the power to show that the way things are is not permanent, not universal, and not necessary... We will not know our own injustice if we cannot imagine justice. We will not be free if we do not imagine freedom. We cannot demand that anyone try to attain justice and freedom who has not had a chance to imagine them as attainable.

~ *Ursula K. Le Guin*

Stories have the power to bring all voices into the conversation in ways that other approaches may not be able to do.

~-Scott Abernathy