



Acceptance of Other Beliefs – UU Third Principle

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

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Welcome, Chalice Lighting: *Here we are, together in this space. By our love and by our covenant, we make this a sacred space. We light the chalice in honor of the light that lives in each of us, the light that shines among us, and the light we bring into the world.*

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

Opening Reading:

Unitarian Universalist 3rd Principle: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations. <https://www.uua.org/beliefs/what-we-believe/principles/3rd>

We don't always have to agree, but we must empower each other to find common ground and build bridges across differences to pursue common good. ~Cory Booker.

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. Tell of a time when you separated yourself from another due to their religious beliefs and why.
2. Tell of a time when you were able to accept another's differing religious beliefs and how that occurred.
3. What ways do you show respect and acceptance of different beliefs in the world at large and in our congregation?
4. What are some similar core values you believe most religious beliefs have?
5. Rev. Rob Hardies defines spiritual growth in one of the readings. How do you define spiritual growth for yourself?

Sitting in Silence (Reflect on questions just posed as you prepare to hear readings)

Readings – see below

Sharing - This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight. Please share one or more responses to the session questions or comment on something else that the questions or readings bring up for you.

(This is a good time to take a brief break—breathing, bathroom, snack, etc.)

Open Discussion -This is a time to respond to something another person said about the topic or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts on this topic. Continue to practice deep listening.

Closing reading:

We receive fragments of holiness, glimpses of eternity, brief moments of insight. Let us gather them up for the precious gifts that they are and, renewed by their grace, move boldly into the unknown.

~ Sara Moores Campbell, Reading # 701 *Singing the Living Tradition*

Announcements/Plans

Check out: As we close today, how are you feeling now?

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Readings

There is a list of how to respect and be open to all beliefs on wiki how.

- Look at people from other faiths as people, not as categories or religions.
- Be informed about others faiths and customs.
- Look for similarities.
- Keep an open mind. If something is unfamiliar or different, don't shut it out. Explore it and understand it.
- Remember that belief (including your own) is just that: belief. The beliefs of those following other faiths were most likely learned much the same way you learned your own, from family, community, and participation in religious instruction.
- Take care when talking about others beliefs - be educated and prepare to lighten up if a debate occurs.
- Do not force your beliefs or try to convert another.
- Be nice overall.

<https://www.wikihow.com/Respect-and-Be-Open-to-All-Beliefs>

Dominator culture has tried to keep us all afraid, to make us choose safety instead of risk, sameness instead of diversity. Moving through that fear, finding out what connects us, reveling in our differences; this is the process that brings us closer, that gives us a world of shared values, of meaningful community. ~bell hooks

If we cannot now end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity.

~John F. Kennedy

We focus on our differences, and that creates negativity and bullying in the world. If everyone focused on what we all have in common – the desire to be happy – we would be. ~Ellen DeGeneres

Human spirit is the ability to face the uncertainty of the future with curiosity and optimism. It is the belief that problems can be solved, differences resolved. It is a type of confidence. ~ Bernard Beckett, *Genesis*

What we have to do is to find a way to celebrate our diversity without fracturing our families or communities.

~Hillary Clinton.

I believe we can change the world if we start listening to one another again. . . . Simple, truthful conversation where we each have a chance to speak, we each feel heard, and we each listen well.

~Margaret Wheatley

Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it. ~ Rumi

Spiritual growth isn't about a vertical ascent to heaven but about growth in every dimension at once. It's spirituality in 3-D. Growth in spirit doesn't measure one's proximity to a God above, but rather the spaciousness of one's own soul—its volume, its capacity, its size.

We need souls that can take in the world in all its complexity and diversity, yet still maintain our integrity. And we need souls that can love and be in relationship with all of this complexity. Instead of fight or flight, we need a spiritual posture of embrace.

~Rev. Rob Hardies, All Souls Church Unitarian, Washington, DC (read more from Rob in *The Seven Principles in Word and Worship*, ed. Ellen Brandenburg.