



Beach Lessons

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Session Plan

Originally written by: *Mary Langer, First Parish Church, Duxbury, MA, July 2011*

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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 holy place. We light the chalice of Unitarian Universalism 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 / Sharing: Share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

Opening Reading

*“Rollers on the beach, wind in the pines,
the slow flapping against sand dunes,
drown out the hectic rhythms of city and suburb,
time tables and schedules.*

*One falls under their spell, relaxes, stretches out prone.
One becomes, in fact, like the element on which one lies,
flattened by the sea, bare, open, empty as the beach,
erased by today’s tides of all yesterday’s scribblings.*

*And then, some morning in the second week,
the mind wakes, comes to life again.
Not in a city sense – no – but beach-wise.
It begins to drift, to play, to turn over
in gentle careless rolls like those lazy waves at the beach.
One never knows what chance treasures
these easy unconscious rollers may toss up,
on the smooth white sand of the conscious mind,
what perfectly rounded stone, what rare shell from the ocean floor.”*

~ Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Gift from the Sea*, 1955

Questions for Sharing and Discussion:

1. How does being on vacation affect you?
2. Does being at the beach affect you differently than a simple vacation?
3. Do you have a particular special memory of being at the beach?
4. Have you ever had an experience, as Anne Morrow Lindbergh describes, of finding a “perfectly rounded stone” or “rare shell from the ocean floor”, either physically or mentally? Share that experience.
5. What can we take from our beach experiences to use to enhance or improve our day-to-day lives?

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.

(This is usually a good time to take a brief break)

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 Words:

“When we start at the center of ourselves, we discover something worthwhile extending towards the periphery of the circle (of mankind). We find again some of the joy in the now, some of the peace in the here, some of the love in me and thee which go to make up the kingdom of heaven on earth.

The waves echo behind me. Patience – Faith – Openness, is what the sea has to teach. But there are other beaches to explore. There are more shells to find. This is only the beginning.”

~ Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Gift from the Sea*, 1955

READINGS:

“There was a magic about the sea. People were drawn to it. People wanted to love by it, swim in it, play in it, look at it. It was a living thing that was as unpredictable as a great stage actor: it could be calm and welcoming, opening its arms to embrace it’s audience one moment, but then could explode with its stormy tempers, flinging people around, wanting them out, attacking coastlines, breaking down islands.”

– **Cecelia Ahern**

“Because there’s nothing more beautiful than the way the ocean refuses to stop kissing the shoreline, no matter how many times it’s sent away.”

– **Sarah Kay**

“She loves the serene brutality of the ocean, loves the electric power she felt with each breath of wet, briny air.”

– **Holly Black**

“Every time I stand before a beautiful beach, its waves seem to **whisper to me**: If you choose the simple things and find joy in nature’s simple treasures, life and living need not be so hard.”

– **Psyche Roxas-Mendoza**

“You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is like an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty.”

– **Mahatma Gandhi**

“To go out with the setting sun on an empty beach is to truly embrace your solitude.”

– **Jeanne Moreau**

“You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.”

- **Jon Kabat-Zinn**

“We must free ourselves of the hope that the sea will ever rest. We must learn to sail in high winds.”

– **Aristotle Onassis**

“Why do we love the sea? It is because it has some potent power to make us think things we like to think.”

– **Robert Henri**