



## BELOVED COMMUNITY

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Covenant Group Session Plan

Revised by Denise Frick, October 2022. Inspired by session from the Unitarian Society of Germantown. Philadelphia, PA.

**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.*

**Check In:** What things do you cherish the most about this (or another) close community?

**Opening Reading:** Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace we can be free.

~Starhawk, American feminist and author

### Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What do you think “beloved community” means? Share an experience you have had of being in beloved community.
2. The idea of creating beloved community is a recurring one in the writings of Dr. King and his teachings about non-violence. Do you think creating beloved community involves reconciliation or redemption of some kind?
3. How does what we do at GUUF, and in this group, model beloved community?
4. It’s said that Beloved Community isn’t about the absence of conflict, but the willingness to stay at the table and work through it. What has been your best strategy for staying at the table? What practice or wise words keep you from running (or attacking) when things get hard?

**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 responses to one or more of 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 reading:

Our goal is to create a beloved community. And this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives. ~ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

### 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

WHAT IS BELOVED COMMUNITY? Beloved Community happens when people of diverse racial, ethnic, educational, class, gender, abilities, sexual orientation backgrounds/identities come together in an interdependent relationship of love, mutual respect, and care that seeks to realize justice within the community and in the broader world.

[What is Beloved Community? — The 8th Principle of Unitarian Universalism \(8thprincipleuu.org\)](http://8thprincipleuu.org)

The goal [of Beloved Community] is reconciliation, not to destroy your opponent, nor cast them out, but to stay in the struggle till love wins. ~Rev. Victoria Safford, UU Minister

Community cannot long feed on itself – it can flourish only with the coming of others from beyond; the unknown and undiscovered sisters and brothers.

~Howard Thurman- American author, philosopher, theologian, mystic, educator, and civil rights leader.

Small group ministry has a spiritual core. The whole group and the individual are contained in some presence larger than human will power and everybody knows it. The second component is authentic community where people can show up and feel “I am valued for being me, for being what I am. I will listen well to the other person.” ~Robert Hill, *The Complete Guide to Small Group Ministry*

To be fully seen by somebody, and then loved anyhow—that is a human offering that can border on miraculous. ~Elizabeth Gilbert, American journalist and author

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has. ~Margaret Mead, American cultural anthropologist

I think we ought always to entertain our opinions with some measure of doubt. I shouldn't wish people dogmatically to believe any philosophy, not even mine.

~Bertrand Russell, British mathematician, philosopher, logician, and public intellectual

The ones who count are those persons who—though they may be of little renown—respond to and are responsible for the continuation of the living spirit. ~Martin Buber, Austrian Jewish and Israeli philosopher

Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world.

~bell hooks, American author and social activist

Love is creative and redemptive. Love builds up and unites; hate tears down and destroys. The aftermath of the ‘fight with fire’ method which you suggest is bitterness and chaos; the aftermath of the love method is reconciliation and creation of the beloved community. Physical force can repress, restrain, coerce, destroy, but it cannot create and organize anything permanent; only love can do that. Yes, love—which means understanding, creative, redemptive goodwill, even for one's enemies.

~Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1957