



A Call to Faith in Turbulent Times - A Call to Relationship in Action*

Greenville UU Fellowship
Covenant Group Session Plan

PREPARATION

- Obtain equipment necessary to play the following audio file, at this link: [Audio file](#) of “All that You Touch (excerpts)” (10:37) by Rev. Theresa I. Soto
- Print copies of the transcript at this link: [Transcript](#) of “All that You Touch (excerpts)”

OPENING (15 minutes)

Welcome participants. To include those who are new to the group, offer the Mutual Invitation model, developed by theologian Eric Law, with these words or your own:

Introductions begin with the leader, who holds power in the group. The leader introduces themselves, then gives away the power by inviting someone else to introduce themselves and to then invite another person to do the same. The process of self-introduction and invitation continues until everyone has been invited to speak. Today’s self-introduction will include your name, what community(ies) you claim as yours, what brought you here today.

Chalice Lighting/Opening Reading:

Invite a participant to light the chalice. Read these words, excerpted from a post by Carey McDonald and used with permission, or, invite someone else to read them:

March with millions! Take an action every day! Target swing congressional districts! I’ve never seen it like this before....The energy is wonderful. It’s also overwhelming, because suddenly millions more people have realized that oppression is not abstract. It’s in their face, feeling like a matter of perhaps literal life and death.

I’d like to encourage us all to stop asking “What do I do?” because this is not simply a matter of fitting the right political tactic to the problem at hand. We are living with the abusive reality of racism, sexism, jingoism, homophobia and transphobia unmasked, no longer bothering with the charade of polite company.

So rather than ask “what do I do?” we should ask “with whom am I in relationship?” You figure out which action to take by paying attention to who’s doing the asking. This is not just semantics. Everything from your Facebook feed to your charitable donations flows from who you are comfortable with, who you listen to, and who’s in your social network. Who you trust. What we need is more of us to have the courage to shift who we hear/see/know/understand/trust/love, and to allow the power of that relationship to change the way we live each day.

FOCUSED CHECK-IN:

Invite participants to take a deep breath together and sit in silence, taking in the words just spoken. Then, begin the focused check-in using the question,

“What relationships are changing the way you understand yourself and the world at this moment?”

Invite participants to respond as they are ready. It is okay to have some silence while participants are thinking about the question.

SPOTLIGHT (12 minutes)

Share this short introduction to the audio:

The Rev. Theresa Ines Soto was ordained in 2016 and serves the congregation in Flint, MI as interim minister. These pieces are excerpted from a sermon she preached on January 22, 2017.

Play the audio. Distribute the transcript for those who may want to refer to it during the reflection time, or later, at home. If you are not able to play the audio, read the transcript aloud.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

Invite participants to reflect on the Soto sermon as well as the words from McDonald you used as chalice lighting words, responding one at a time as they are moved, without cross-talk or discussion. Use all three questions or choose one that speaks to the group and go into more depth with it. If your group is interested in finding out more about resilience circles, mentioned by Rev. Soto, refer them to localcircles.org.

1. How does participating in the process of change affect the way you are living your life right now? Where are you trying—with other people and other forces—to co-create change?
2. Who or what is a tonic for your depleted human heart and weakened human will that can point you in the “right” direction? Are you willing to allow yourself to be redirected?
3. Resilience Circles, as Rev. Soto describes them, are small groups that gather for learning, mutual aid, and social action. To what communities (of any type) do you already belong that gather with one or more of these expressed purposes? What do you bring to those communities, and what do they offer you?

SHARING AND DEEP LISTENING: We take time to reflect on the readings and questions, responding one at a time as we are moved, without cross-talk or discussion. Passing is allowed, but everyone has the opportunity to speak once before anyone speaks twice, and we listen deeply to one another without needing to formulate a reply, or fix, or help, or set anyone straight.

SILENCE (2 minutes):

OPEN DISCUSSION: We take some time to share what we have appreciated about the sharing, and what questions or longings we have now. Responsive conversation is OK during this portion, but continue to practice deep listening.

APPRECIATIONS AND LONGINGS

Invite participants to take a few moments to quietly reflect on what they have appreciated about their time together and what longings they are left with, then share with one another in the group or in pairs.

CLOSING READING:

Share these words adapted from ones by the Rev. Gretchen Haley, used with permission:

*Though you have been warned
and given plenty of explanations
reasons to do otherwise
you have persisted
to claim a life of joy, and justice
to carve out this time
this space for the renewal
of your own heart
despite all the reasons, the resistance
fighting for your attention, luring you towards fear
you persist
to practice gratitude
for this day, this life
that has been given
this chance to begin again
and so let us gather in our communities, our congregations, our neighborhoods, and our homes
that we might
offer one another courage, strength
healing, hope
and this promise to
persist in kindness,
persevere in compassion
and
prevail in a life that is for more than ourselves.*

Extinguish the chalice.

*This session was adapted from a small group session series: *A Call to Faith in Turbulent Times*, authored by Marta I. Valentin, a UU minister currently serving in Medford, MA. This is the fourth session in the series.

All four sessions in the series are available online at <http://www.uua.org/re/group/call-faith-turbulent-times>