



Gratitude

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina
Covenant Group Session Plan
Revised by Denise Frick, March 2024

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

Opening Reading

We Give Thanks

Oh we give thanks for this precious day
For all gathered here, and those far away;
For this time we share, with love and care,
Oh we give thanks for this precious day

~ Wendy Luella Perkins, UU Minister, song #1010 from *Singing the Journey*

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What does gratitude feel like for you?
2. Are you especially grateful for someone or something from your background or family history? If so, please tell us about it.
3. How have you found ways to be grateful for difficult people or circumstances?
4. If you have a gratitude practice, please share how that works for you.
5. Please share your specific response to one of the readings on Gratitude. What about this reading resonated for you?

Readings – see below

Sitting in Silence (Reflect on questions and readings before sharing starts)

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 of your 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. Continue to practice deep listening.

Closing reading:

For all that has been – Thanks! For all that shall be – Yes!
~ Dag Hammarskjöld

Announcements/Plans

Personal Check Out: As we close today, how are you feeling now? Also, please share your comments on how our circle process went today.

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

Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace, and gratitude.

~ Denis Waitley, speaker, writer and consultant

Ironically, gratitude's most powerful mysteries are often revealed when we are struggling in the midst of personal turmoil. ~ Sarah Ban Breathnach, author and speaker

Being grateful all the time isn't easy. But it's when you feel least thankful that you are most in need of what gratitude can give you: perspective. Gratitude can transform any situation, It alters your vibration, moving you from negative energy to positive. It's the quickest, easiest, most powerful way to effect change in your life - this I know for sure."

~Oprah Winfrey, *What I Know for Sure*

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.

~ Albert Schweitzer

Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude.

~ A.A. Milne in *Winnie the Pooh*

Gratitude is like a flashlight. If you go out into your yard at night and turn on a flashlight, you suddenly can see what's there. It was always there, but you couldn't see it in the dark.

~ Dawna Markova, *Attitudes of Gratitude*

Gratitude goes beyond the 'mine' and 'thine' and claims the truth that all of life is a pure gift. In the past I always thought of gratitude as a spontaneous response to the awareness of gifts received, but now I realize that gratitude can also be lived as a discipline. The discipline of gratitude is the explicit effort to acknowledge that all I am and have is given to me as a gift of love, a gift to be celebrated with joy.

~ Henri J.M. Nouwen, 1932-1996, Dutch Catholic priest, professor, writer and theologian.

Have gratitude for the things you're discarding. By giving gratitude, you're giving closure to the relationship with that object, and by doing so, it becomes a lot easier to let go. ~Marie Kondo, Japanese author

I quickly realized that gratitude wasn't the same as happiness—it has a much deeper resonance. Most of us feel cheered when something nice occurs—a friend sends flowers or we spend an afternoon in the park. But those moments can be fragile and fleeting, and what happens when they're over? Because it's not dependent on specific events, gratitude is long lasting and impervious to change or adversity. It requires an active emotional involvement—you can't be passively grateful, you actually have to stop and feel it, experience the emotion. So it creates an inner richness that's sustaining in difficult times as well as good ones.

~Janice Kaplan, *The Gratitude Diaries: How a Year Looking on the Bright Side Can Transform Your Life*

Pre-Reading for Gratitude Session

If you would like, please consider reading this before attending the session on Gratitude. If you try any of the suggestions from Rev. Guengerich, please share your experience.

...I believe we as Unitarian Universalists are called to be disciples of gratitude—to learn gratitude as a daily practice. I call this path the discipline of gratitude.

Let me suggest a couple of simple ways we can begin to walk this path. Some members of my congregation keep “gratitude journals.” You can, too. Each morning or night, make a list of things, people, and experiences for which you are grateful. Soon, you’ll find yourself paying closer attention to your life. You’ll notice the change in the air as spring arrives, the fleeting smile of a passerby, the resolute purpose of a child bound for school. Life is constituted by moments like these. The discipline of gratitude gives us a new way of looking at the world.

Here’s my other suggestion. Each evening at dinnertime, pause for a moment, clasp hands if someone is next to you, and repeat these lines from Psalm 118, which conclude the benediction we say each week at church: “This is the day we are given. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.” Holly, Zoë, and I have been doing this for several years now. It reminds us of how fortunate we are to have each other, and our home, and this day.

The discipline of gratitude is about knowing how much we have been given and acknowledging the scope of our dependence. It’s about saying “thank you” to the people we love, to the world we enjoy, to the universe we inhabit, and to the God who holds us all in a divine embrace.

~ Rev. Galen Guengerich, Senior Minister, All Souls Unitarian Church,
New York City, extracted from the closing paragraphs of the essay:
The Heart of Our Faith, UU World magazine, Spring, 2007.

The full text, ***The Heart of Our Faith***, is highly recommended reading. It is online at:
<http://www.uuworld.org/ideas/articles/11144.shtml>