



Heritage

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Based on material from Soul Matters-Small Group-The Gift of Heritage- October 2023

Compiled by Pam Stevenson, October 2023

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

Opening Words: Be on the lookout, friends. The ghosts are on their way! After all, you can't talk about heritage without talking about – and encountering – ancestors. And we're not talking about relatives here. As Ralph Ellison points out, there's a big difference between relatives and ancestors. Relatives give us our [hazel] eyes and bowed legs; ancestors bestow a legacy. Relatives are those we tell stories about; ancestors call us to carry stories forward. Relatives live on in our DNA; ancestors live in the whispers of our hearts. Our relatives allowed us to be here; our ancestors tell us why we are here. The difference comes down to values – values we use to construct not just our stories but ourselves. *Soul Matters Introduction to the Gift of Heritage*

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What story told by (or about) your ancestors has shaped you the most?
2. If you could talk with one of your ancestors, who would you choose? And what would you ask them?
3. Often parents consciously or unconsciously transfer their unfulfilled dreams onto their children. What have you learned about dancing with your parents' unfulfilled dreams?
4. What is your favorite family memento? Why does it have such a hold on you?
5. What story do you want to be remembered by?

Readings- Words from the Common Bowl: Quotes/Readings

Sitting in Silence (Reflect on questions and readings as you prepare what you would like to share.)

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: ...Remember your birth, how your mother struggled to give you form and breath. You are evidence of her life, and her mother's and hers.... Remember the earth whose skin you are... Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their tribes, their families their histories, too. Talk to them. Listen to them. They are alive poems... Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the origin of this universe. Remember you are all people and all people are you... Remember. *Joy Harjo*

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

Some people are your relatives, but others are your ancestors, and you choose the ones you want to have as ancestors. You create yourself out of those values. *Ralph Ellison*

Walking. I am listening in a deeper way. Suddenly all my ancestors are behind me. Be still, they say. Watch and listen. You are the result of the love of thousands. *Linda Hogan*

To acknowledge our ancestors means we are aware that we did not make ourselves. *Alice Walker*

When a society or a civilization perishes, one condition can always be found. They forgot where they came from. *Carl Sandburg*

When we lie about the past, we steal from the future. *Abigail Bengson*

We are a collage – a remix – of our ancestors. We have spiritual DNA, *as well as physical*, and our lot in life is to answer the questions posed by the people who came before us. *Austin Kleon*

I became aware of the fateful links between me and my ancestors. I feel very strongly that I am under the influence of things or questions which were left incomplete and unanswered by my parents and grandparents and more distant ancestors...It has always seemed to me that I had to answer questions which fate had posed to my forefathers, and which had not yet been answered, or as if I had to complete, or perhaps continue, things which previous ages had left unfinished. *Carl Jung*

Whereas history pleads, “Protect what we put into place” Heritage urges, “Know the plotline of which you are a part.” History is what happened; Heritage is a story still unfolding. History tends to trap us in tales about what they did; Heritage inevitably gets us talking about what we are called to do. *Rev. Scott Tayler*

You are remembered for the rules you break. *Douglas MacArthur*