



Humanism

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

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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: Share a bit about yourself, a thought, an event in your life, or something intended to be meaningful to these friends with whom we gather today.

Opening Words:

Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

~UU Humanist Association website.

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What aspects of Humanism do you connect with or resonate with your religious beliefs?
2. How do you see atheists, agnostics, humanists and other non-theists welcomed and included at GUUF? In what ways do we “Welcome all people...regardless of religious belief.”
3. If you describe yourself as a Humanist, share what that means to you. How do you explain your humanist beliefs to others?

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 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 reading:

We affirm the unfailing renewal of life. Rising from the earth, and reaching for the sun, all living creatures shall fulfill themselves.

We affirm the steady growth of human companionship. Rising from ancient cradles and reaching for the stars, people the world over shall seek the ways of understanding.

We affirm a continuing hope. That out of every tragedy the spirits of individuals shall rise to build a better world. ~Leonard Mason, British UU Minister, 1912-1995. *Singing the Living Tradition*, Reading # 470

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

I believe that 'happy Humanism' is a part of the faith position of almost all Unitarians and Universalists. It is not alien to any of us. We are all covenanted to affirm and promote the worth and dignity of every person. We have faith in the possibility of improving human life, and see the power for change in humanity itself. We see the human race as essentially one people. And we are committed to truth-seeking and truth-speaking.

~Rev. Dr. Linda Weaver Horton, Minister of the Unitarian Fellowship of Kelowna, British Columbia

What are human values? They are the values of the modern world. We hold Humanist values whenever we put human welfare and this-worldly concerns first.

~L. C. Paine, Author of *Reinventing Religion: Introducing a Humanist*

The task of humanism is to unfold the personality of men and women, to fit and qualify them for the best use of their natural powers, and the fullest enjoyment of the natural world and the human society around them. It conceives of religion as spiritual enthusiasm directed toward the enrichment of the individual life and the improvement of the social order.

~John H. Dietrich, Unitarian minister, born at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, is called the "Father of Religious Humanism". 1878-1957

What do we believe?

As Humanists, we rely on reason and compassion, rather than supernatural revelation, to guide us in our quest to become more fully human as individuals and to cooperatively improve society and sustain the planet. We espouse an "embodied" Humanism that celebrates the joy of lived experience and the importance of love in human relationships. We value experience tempered with reason, knowing that we are hard-wired for empathy and compassion. We also know that our lived experience as humans is deeply enriched by beauty, and that encouraging, experiencing, and participating in the arts and humanities helps us all to celebrate our conviction that being alive is miracle enough. We offer all Humanist UUs an opportunity to join us in our quest for a meaningful life, making full use of the best tools of mind and heart, reason and compassion.

~UU Humanist Association brochure, <https://huumanists.org/sites/huumanists.org/files/UUHumanist-Brochure-06-2014.pdf>

As I grow older, I appreciate more and more the need for a spiritual life. I find my spirituality mostly in using my intelligence and creativity to try to build an enduring peace and beauty in my life. My Humanist belief helps me to see that to be honest with myself, to face life openly, and to be loyal to high ideals is to be spiritual. There is a unique spark of divinity in each of us by virtue of our human endowment; we need only try to find it. My search for that spark within me gives me constant challenge and consoling calm.

~Sarah Oelberg, UU Minister, excerpt from *Faith of a Humanist*.

<https://www.uua.org/beliefs/what-we-believe/beliefs/humanism/uu-humanist>

Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. Affirming the dignity of each human being, it supports liberty and opportunity consonant with social and planetary responsibility. Free of theism and other supernatural beliefs, humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than theological or ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

~ Explanation printed on business card carried by Jim Yockey, 1929-2021, member of Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, SC.