



Income Inequality and Homelessness

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Covenant Group Session Plan

Written by David Funderburk, April 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 Reading

“What we would like to do is change the world—make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves... by fighting for better conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, the poor, of the destitute... [W]e can, to a certain extent, change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever widening circle will reach around the world.” – Dorothy Day

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. How has poverty or income inequality affected your life or the lives of your loved ones?
2. How does income inequality affect how you relate to people who are richer or poorer than you?
3. When you imagine different strategies to eliminate poverty and homelessness, which strategies are you interested in getting involved in?
4. What is something new you have learned or come to understand about poverty, homelessness, or income inequality?

Readings- Words from the Common Bowl: Quotes/Readings

Sharing – Please share your thinking about one or more of the session questions. During this time everyone has the opportunity to speak without interruption while others listen deeply. “Everyone gets to speak once before anyone speaks twice.” Deep listening means we are being entirely attentive. We don’t interrupt or give advice. There is no need to fix or save or set someone straight. We are simply making and holding a safe place where we are allowed to show up.

Sitting in Silence

Open Discussion -This is a time for active conversations when we may respond to something another person said about the topic or relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts. Continue to practice deep listening.

Closing reading

“The world now has the means to end extreme poverty; we pray we will have the will.”

--Anonymous

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 meet again.

Readings

“An imbalance between rich and poor is the oldest and most fatal ailment of all republics.” — Plutarch, Greek historian

“Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime.” — Aristotle

“If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.”
-- John F. Kennedy, 35th President of the United States

“Anyone who has ever struggled with poverty knows how extremely expensive it is to be poor.” — James Baldwin

“We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty.” -- Mother Teresa

“Healthcare as a human right, it means that every child, no matter where you are born, should have access to a college or trade-school education if they so choose it, and I think no person should be homeless if we can have public structures and public policy to allow for people to have homes and food and lead a dignified life in the United States.” -- Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

“There is a lot that happens around the world we cannot control. We cannot stop earthquakes, we cannot prevent droughts, and we cannot prevent all conflict, but when we know where the hungry, the homeless and the sick exist, then we can help.” -- Jan Schakowsky

“As long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality exist in the world, none of us can truly exist.” — Nelson Mandela

“Imagination has people thinking they can go from being poor to a millionaire as part of a shared American dream. Imagination turns Brown bombers into terrorists and white bombers into mentally ill victims. Imagination gives us borders, gives us superiority, gives us race as an indicator of ability. I often feel I am trapped inside someone else's capability. I often feel I am trapped inside someone' else's imagination, and I must engage my own imagination in order to break free.”

— Adrienne Maree Brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*

“Do not let your lack of money and possessions make you feel negative about your worth as a human being. Do not let your credit score, man-made poverty, and/or racism define your extreme power.”

— Tricia Hersey, *Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto*

Videos related to this topic, please view these ahead of the session if you can.

- “Why is it so hard to escape poverty?” - Ann-Helén Bay: <https://youtu.be/D9N7QalOkG8> (4:45)
- “Is Inequality Inevitable?” - https://youtu.be/rEnf_CFoyv0 (6:49)