



Inherent Worth and Dignity

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Covenant Group Session Plan

Revised by Pam Stevenson

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

Opening Words: We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: The inherent worth and dignity of every person.

~UU First Principle

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What challenges your belief in the inherent worth and dignity of other people?
2. What inspires and strengthens you to see the inherent worth and dignity of every person?
3. When is it difficult to hold to this attitude of respect? What enables you to respect the worth and dignity of people when they are: irritating..., boring..., abusive to others..., dressed shabbily..., holding beliefs opposite to your own?
4. When have you lost your hold on this principle? What did you do to regain it for yourself?
5. What social realities tend to work against the First Principle and what can you do to actively promote the First Principle in light of these?

Readings: Words from the Common Bowl: Quotes/Readings

Sitting in Silence

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.

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:

Keep alert, stand firm in your faith; be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.

1 Corinthians 16, Reading 713, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Announcements/Plans

Check out: As we close our meeting today, how are you feeling now?

Extinguish the Chalice

Readings

We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all persons. Imperfect as we are, this principle calls us into right relationship with others. It calls for profound respect, even when we differ with the views or behavior of another. It calls for gentleness and forgiveness and the understanding that redemption is just a decision away. It calls us to leave the safety of our suburbs and stand against hunger and hopelessness in our urban streets. Our first principle remains a touchstone out of our remarkable tradition, a covenant of relationship that supports the other principles and orients us remarkably when we lose our way.

~Marilyn Sewell, UU minister, from *"With Purpose and Principle- Essays about the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism"*, Skinner House Books, Boston:1998

We come together to renew our faith
in the holiness, goodness, and beauty of life;
To reaffirm the way of the open mind and full heart;
To rekindle the flame of memory and hope;
To reclaim the vision of an earth more fair,
with all her people one.

~Eric Heller-Wagner, UU Minister

May we be reminded here of our highest aspirations,
And inspired to bring our gifts of love and service to the altar of humanity.
May we know once again that we are not isolated beings
But connected, in mystery and miracle, to the universe,
To this community and to each other.

~Anonymous

Reverence and respect for human nature is at the core of Unitarian Universalist (UU) faith. We believe that all the dimensions of our being carry the potential to do good. We celebrate the gifts of being human: our intelligence and capacity for observation and reason, our senses and ability to appreciate beauty, our creativity, our feelings and emotions. We cherish our bodies as well as our souls. We can use our gifts to offer love, to work for justice, to heal injury, to create pleasure for ourselves and others.

"Just to be is a blessing. Just to live is holy," the great twentieth-century Rabbi Abraham Heschel wrote. Unitarian Universalists affirm the inherent worth and dignity of each person as a given of faith—an unshakeable conviction calling us to self-respect and respect for others

~Rev. Dr. Rebecca Ann Parker, UU minister, theologian, and author.