



Invitation, Living Love through the Practice of Invitation

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Covenant Group Session Plan, Based on material from Soul Matters-Small Group: Living Love through the Practice of Invitation, September 2024. Compiled and adapted by Denise Frick, September 2024

Spiritual Exercise – to be done before the Covenant Circle meeting (optional)

The Invitation of a Story

Sometimes the best invitations are those made by a story. Here's one about a hunter and the mythical "fox woman." As you listen to the 7-minute video, use a disciplined listening practice: i.e., ask yourself as you listen, "How is this story trying to offer me a message of comfort, a message of challenge, or reconnection with an important memory?"

A more focused question to listen with might be: "What have I lost through my decisions to disinvite the difficult?" or "Where am I being invited to embrace and invite in the full experience of something - the parts that are easy and beautiful as well as the parts that 'stink'?"

The story is at this link: The Hunter and the Fox Woman - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kn2DB11yL5A>

Welcome, Chalice Lighting:

Come, come, whoever you are, wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving. Ours is no caravan of despair. Come, yet again come. ~Adapted from Rumi, Song #188, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Check In: Briefly share something from your life since we last met.

Opening Words:

Do not try to save the whole world or do anything grandiose.

Instead, create a clearing in the dense forest of your life and wait there patiently, until the song that is your life falls into your own cupped hands and you recognize and greet it.

Only then will you know how to give yourself to this world so worthy of rescue.

-Clearing by Martha Postlewaite

Questions to prompt and guide Discussion:

1. What is the most beautiful invitation you have ever received?
2. We all inspire and influence people with our way of being in the world. What is your way of being in the world inviting people to do or become?
3. This year, we're exploring practices that help us embody our new UU core value of liberating love. Who's "act of invitation" has taught you the most about what it means to love?
4. What have you unwittingly invited into your life in the past year? What snuck in without an invitation?
5. If you could invite two new things into your life in the coming year, what would they be?

Readings

Definitions: Invitation

1. the act of inviting, such as an offer of hospitality, 2. the act of enticing or attracting; allurement, 3. a provocation, 4. a formal request to be present

Synonyms: encouragement, provocation, temptation, enticement, attraction

Antonyms: denial, refusal, discouragement, repulsion

A real conversation always contains an invitation. You are inviting another person to reveal [themselves] to you, to tell you who they are or what they want.

~David Whyte

Something within us knows us better than we know ourselves. It knows what is right for us. It speaks by silently withdrawing energy from things that are not for us. It doesn't care about our comfort; it cares about our growth.

~James Hollis

True hospitality is when someone leaves your home feeling better about themselves, not better about you.

~Shauna Niequist

Change is not a threat to your life, but an invitation to live.

~Adrienne Rich

There is a love that sets us free. Not free as in having the power to do whatever we want, but free as in not weighed down or bound by the patterns of hatred and control that get passed from generation to generation... Free as in knowing without a doubt that we are worthy and that it is ours to invite others into that same wisdom for themselves. Free to imagine a world where children are never in harm's way...

~Rev. Dr. Sofia Betancourt

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 responses to one or more of the session questions, the readings or your experience with one of the spiritual practices. (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:

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. ~Paul's letter to the Hebrews

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.