



JOY

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Covenant Group Session Plan

Based on session by Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stony Brook, NY, May 2013 by Rev. Margie Allen and Rev. Dr. Linda Anderson. Revised by Pam Stevenson - October 2020

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

Occasionally in life there are those moments of unutterable fulfillment which cannot be completely explained by those symbols called words. Their meanings can only be articulated by the inaudible language of the heart.

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What feelings and images come to mind when you think of the word "joy?"
2. What brought you joy when you were a child?
3. Can you remember a time when you were filled with great joy? Tell us the story of that experience.
4. Who has served as a model of joyful living in your life, a model and inspiration to you? Tell us about that person.
5. What regular habits and practices might create more joyfulness in your heart, home and community?

Readings- Words from the Common Bowl: Quotes/Readings, see below

Sitting in Silence

Sharing – Please share your thinking about one or more of the session questions or readings. 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.

Break

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:

I cannot believe that the inscrutable universe turns on an axis of suffering; surely the strange beauty of the world must somewhere rest on pure joy! ~ Louise Bogan

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

The beating heart of the universe is holy joy. ~Martin Buber

We have God's joy in our blood. ~Frederick Buechner, *The Longing for Home*

Joy to the world, all the boys and girls. Joy to the fishes in the deep blue sea. Joy to you and me.
~ Three Dog Night (*The Big Chill*)

This the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. ~George Bernard Shaw

'Without pain, how could we know joy?' This is an old argument in the field of thinking about suffering. Its stupidity and lack of sophistication could be plumbed for centuries but suffice it to say that the existence of broccoli does not, in any way, affect the taste of chocolate." ~ John Green, *The Fault in Our Stars*

There is an alchemy in sorrow. It can be transmuted into wisdom, which, if it does not bring joy, can yet bring happiness. ~ Pearl Buck

Joy and sorrow are inseparable . . . together they come and when one sits alone with you. . Remember that the other is asleep upon your bed. ~ Kahlil Gibran

Joy is the holy fire that keeps our purpose warm and our intelligence aglow ~ Helen Keller

Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.
~ Henri Nouwen

I want a life that sizzles and pops and makes me laugh out loud. And I don't want to get to the end, or to tomorrow, even, and realize that my life is a collection of meetings and pop cans and errands and receipts and dirty dishes. I want to eat cold tangerines and sing out loud in the car with the windows open and wear pink shoes and stay up all night laughing and paint my walls the exact color of the sky right now. I want to sleep hard on clean white sheets and throw parties and eat ripe tomatoes and read books so good they make me jump up and down, and I want my every day to make God belly laugh, glad that he gave life to someone who loves the gift. ~Shauna Niequist

Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy.
~Thich Nhat Hanh

There are random moments - tossing a salad, coming up the driveway to the house, ironing the seams flat on a quilt square, standing at the kitchen window and looking out at the delphiniums, hearing a burst of laughter from one of my children's rooms - when I feel a wavelike rush of joy. This is my true religion: arbitrary moments of nearly painful happiness for a life I feel privileged to lead.
~Elizabeth Berg, *"The Art of Mending"*