



## Our Parents, Ourselves

Greenville UU Fellowship  
Covenant Group Session Plan

**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 something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

### Opening reading

Upon the birth of her granddaughter, poet and longtime Unitarian Universalist, Phoebe Hoss, gave her the gift of “Original Mystery.”

You, you dear few  
solid pounds of bone,  
muscle, luscious  
rose-petal flesh; you  
with your thrusting,  
quivering, questing arms  
and legs; you with your  
wordless, watching  
eyes; you—you  
creature of no  
knowing—are somehow, somewhere  
within  
your being imbibing  
the kaleidoscope  
of ours. Somewhere

in you some pristine  
core, some invisible  
sponge, is soaking  
up smiles, frowns, bits  
and pieces of ourselves—  
fragments we’ve carefully  
ordered over the years, the  
bright we know, the shadows  
we don’t—and ordering them  
anew, ordering them as  
what your eyes  
will see, your ears hear,  
your tongue speak;  
ordering them, finally,  
as uniquely you.

### Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. How distinct are you from your parents—the parents you know as your birth parents or perhaps the birth parents you never knew but the parents that raised you?
2. To what extent did you inherit—by nature and nurture—the traits and core beliefs of those who raised you? Are you uniquely yourself? How are you your parents with a twist? How are you the spitting image?
3. What about you reflects who your parents are or were? What about you sharply contrasts with who your parents are or were?
4. Tell a story that illustrates your gratitude for a way in which you are like your parents or a way in which you are significantly different from your parents.
5. Sometimes, you choose your family. Sometimes you have to. Why? What is that like? Are those bonds as strong as blood?

**Readings from the Common Bowl (See Quotes / Readings at end of session)**

**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)

### **Sitting in Silence**

**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:**

Help us to be the always hopeful  
 gardeners of the spirit  
 who know that without darkness  
 nothing comes to birth  
 as without light  
 nothing flowers.

~May Sarton

### **Announcements/Plans**

**Personal Check Out:** As we close our meeting today, how are you feeling now?

### **Extinguish the Chalice**

Adapted from two covenant circle sessions:

*Our Parents, Ourselves* – Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
 Circle Ministry, Rev. Jan Carlsson-Bull for Circle Ministry at First Parish UU Cohasset, MA  
<http://www.smallgroupministry.net/public/sessions/>

*The Things we Were Told* - GUUF Covenant Circle Document,  
<http://greenvilleuu.com/pages/covenant-listings.html>

## Readings

...Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.  
They come through you but not from you,  
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may house their bodies but not their souls,  
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,  
    which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.  
You may strive to be like them,  
    but seek not to make them like you....

~ Kahlil Gibran

Children begin by loving their parents; as they grow older they judge them; sometimes they forgive them.

~Oscar Wilde

Conscience is less an inner voice than the memory of a mother's glance.

~Robert Brault

Friends are God's apology for relations. ~Hugh Kingsmill

Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands.

~Anne Frank

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

~Maya Angelou

I think all of us are always five years old in the presence and absence of our parents.

~Sherman Alexie

By the time I realized my parents were right, I had kids that didn't believe me.

~Hussein Nishah

The family is that dear octopus from whose tentacles we never quite escape, nor, in our inmost hearts, ever quite wish to escape. ~Dodie Smith