



## Personally Powerful Books

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina  
Covenant Group Session Plan

Inspired by small group ministry sessions of Miami Valley UU Fellowship Dayton, OH, Rachel Feltner; and UU Fellowship of Stoney Brook, NY, Rev. Margie Allen and Rev. Dr. Linda Anderson. Consolidated/edited by Gayl Glover. August 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 Words:

There is no Frigate like a Book  
To take us Lands away  
Nor any Coursers like a Page  
Of prancing Poetry –  
This Traverse may the poorest take  
Without oppress of Toll –  
How frugal is the Chariot  
That bears the Human Soul –  
~Emily Dickinson

### Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What transformative books did you read during your childhood and youth?
2. How have books inspired or transformed you as an adult? (in term of insight, personal growth, spiritual growth, habits and practices, or other ways)
3. Are there certain books you turn to when you need comfort, advice, hope, or encouragement?
4. From the Latin *scribere* "to write" comes our word scripture. What has this word come to mean to you? Would you consider any books you know and love to be "scripture" by your own definition?

**Readings:** see next page

### 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.

## **Readings:**

In books I have traveled, not only to other worlds, but into my own. I learned who I was and who I wanted to be, what I might aspire to, and what I might dare to dream about my world and myself. More powerfully and persuasively than from the “shalt nots” of the Ten Commandments, I learned the difference between good and evil, right and wrong.

~Anna Quindlen (*How Reading Changed My Life*, 1998)

How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book.

~Henry David Thoreau (*Walden*, 1854)

Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read.

~Groucho Marx

I suggest that the only books that influence us are those for which we are ready, and which have gone a little farther down our particular path than we have yet got ourselves.

~E.M. Forster (*Two Cheers for Democracy*, 1951)

Books are the compasses and telescopes and sextants and charts which other men have prepared to help us navigate the dangerous seas of human life. ~Jesse Lee Bennett

There are books so alive that you're always afraid that while you weren't reading, the book has gone and changed, has shifted like a river; while you went on living, it went on living too, and like a river moved on and moved away. No one has stepped twice into the same river. But did anyone ever step twice into the same book? ~Marina Tsvetaeva

"Tell me what you read and I'll tell you who you are" is true enough, but I'd know you better if you told me what you reread. ~François Mauriac

A house without books is like a room without windows. ~Heinrich Mann

A book is a garden, an orchard, a storehouse, a party, a company by the way, a counselor, a multitude of counselors. ~Henry Ward Beecher

Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. It is wholesome and bracing for the mind to have its faculties kept on the stretch. ~Augustus Hare

## **Closing words:**

“We don’t need a list of rights and wrongs, tables of dos and don’ts: we need books, time, and silence. *Thou shalt not* is soon forgotten, but *Once upon a time* lasts forever.”

~Philip Pullman

## **Announcements/Plans**

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

**Extinguish the Chalice**