



Radical Hospitality

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Written by: Jim Hennigan

May 2016

Welcome, Chalice Lighting: “I bind my soul this day to the neighbor far away, and the stranger near at hand, in this town, and in this land.” ~ Lauchlan M. Watt, poet and minister of Glasgow Cathedral (1867-1957).

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

Opening Words:

In ancient times hospitality was a religious imperative since it was a matter of survival that one’s door be open to the stranger who needed shelter and sustenance. To refuse a traveler hospitality was to let him die. Today hospitality also has an additional meaning. It is now the opening of one’s self to the stranger – or to a friend. This is sometimes called radical hospitality. It requires ongoing conversation, not agreement and asks us to live with differences without the expectation they will go away. ~ *Kate Covey*

Group Activity: We’re going to have a hands-on exercise to practice radical hospitality.

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What makes hospitality “radical?”
2. Have you experienced “radical hospitality”? If so, what did that person or group do to make you feel truly welcome?
3. Describe a time that an encounter with a stranger or an unexpected guest touched your life in positive ways.
4. What factors, fears, or boundaries hold you back from connecting with strangers?
5. Can you offer some ideas for ways that you could practice “radical hospitality” in your daily life? What would you like to see in our congregation?

Sitting in Silence (Reflect on questions just posed as you prepare to hear readings)

Readings- See below

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.

(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:

“Kindness is in our power, even when fondness is not.” ~Samuel Johnson

Announcements/Plans

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

Extinguish the Chalice

Readings:

We are all wanderers, passing through, guests of the universe, and our job as a religious clan is to share earth's bounty and to set a warm, inviting place for one another. ~ Rev. Dr. Carolyn and Rev. Tom Owen-Towle, ministers emeriti, First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

Hospitality is a lively, courageous, and convivial way of living that challenges our compulsion either to turn away or to turn inward and disconnect ourselves from others. ~ Fr. Daniel Homan (Benedictine monk) and Lonni Collins Pratt (retreat leader)

We are practicing hospitality when we welcome guests — including strangers and enemies — into our lives with graciousness. An open house reveals certain things about us: we are well-disposed toward others, we focus on the positive, and we believe the universe is basically a friendly place. Sometimes hospitality requires that we cross boundaries and dismantle some of the barriers erected in our society to keep "the other" out. Sometimes it means entertaining ideas that might be alien to us. To be hospitable, you need to accept pluralism as a natural condition in the world. ~Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, Co-founders, Center for Spirituality and Practice in Claremont, California

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. ~Hebrews 13:2

Radical hospitality is hospitality as spiritual practice. I'm not talking about just opening the doors—I'm talking about opening the heart. ~ Rev. Dr. Marilyn J. Sewell, Minister Emerita, First Unitarian Church in Portland

At its core, America is an experiment in radical hospitality. To belong here you don't have to have ancestry or money. Theoretically. Although America was built upon the near decimation of the Native populations and built by enslaved Africans, relying subsequently on immigrant communities that it has treated poorly, it is also a home for the tired and weary fleeing war and persecution or seeking better opportunities. We're not one or the other; we are both. The question is, which one will we choose to be as we move forward? ~ Becca Hartman Pickerill, Campus Stewardship Manager at Interfaith Youth Core, Chicago

Jesus' radical hospitality knew no racial, social, ethnic or economic boundaries, as he proclaimed salvation for all. Jesus' table of hospitality has no boundaries. How radical are we in our hospitality to those outside our comfort zone? We see them almost every day, but do we invite them to our table?...In the name of preserving the tradition of the church, have we neglected to pull up an extra chair at our church table for those who are different and have different ideas? Have we intentionally shut out changes for fear of losing control of the way things have always been? ~ Rev. Tim McConnell, Asst. Pastor, Long's Chapel UMC, Lake Junaluska, NC

When there is true hospitality, not many words are needed. ~ Arapaho Proverb

Hospitality is not just an action, but a reflection of the state of mind of the person offering it. Therefore, only an implaced person can offer true hospitality. ~ Karen E. Fetter