



Renewal (Soul Matters Edition)

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Based on material from Soul Matters-Small Group: The Gift of Renewal, June 2024

Compiled and adapted by Kris Seitz, May 2024

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:

Each person deserves a day away in which no problems are confronted, no solutions searched for. Each of us needs to withdraw from the cares which will not withdraw from us.

~Maya Angelou 1928-2014, American memoirist, poet, and civil rights activist

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. Describe a person or group whose way of being in the world renews your faith in humanity?
2. How does your body tell you it is in need of renewal? What is it telling you now?
3. Renewal often happens through becoming lighter. What might your inner wisdom be nudging you to shed, let go of, or give up?
4. Which time or event of your life renewed you the most?
5. What steps or methods do you use when you are in need of personal or spiritual renewal?
6. If one were to propose that you make room for a day in which you produce nothing, don't check a single thing off your to-do list, confront no problems and search for no solutions, how would you react?

Readings

We are renewed by so many things: nature, each other, memory, music, play, solitude, silence, and - of course - our faith. Through small groups, calls to justice work, worship, caring for one another, covenant and accountability, our faith breathes new life into us. ~Soul Matters, The Gift of Renewal

A day when one has not pushed oneself to the limit seems a damaged, damaging day, a sinful day. Not so! The most valuable thing one can do for the psyche, occasionally, is to let it rest, wander, live in the changing light of a room. ~May Sarton 1912-1995, Belgian-American novelist and poet

You know that the antidote to exhaustion is not necessarily rest? ... The antidote to exhaustion is wholeheartedness. ~David Whyte b.1955, Anglo-Irish poet

Humanity is on a treadmill that is moving fast. And if you were to ask, "Where are you going? The answer may very well be, "I don't know but I have to get there quickly."

~Betty Goedhart b.1934, Oldest performing flying trapeze artist!

All you can do for another person is be an environment in which if they wanted to come up for air, they could.
~Ram Dass 1931-2019, American spiritual teacher, psychologist, and writer

When we live and work in twenty-four-hour shifts without rest – we are on war time, mobilized for battle. Yes, we are strong and capable people, we can work without stopping, faster and faster, electric lights making artificial day so the whole machine can labor without ceasing. But remember: No living thing lives like this.
~Wayne Mueller b.1953, Ordained minister and author

You can't live life at warp speed without warping your soul. ~Lance Witt b. 1960, Pastor and author

To be a people of renewal is to ask not simply, "How do I refresh?" but also "How do I return?" The challenge of life is not just about moving forward but moving forward without losing touch with all we have held dear.
~ Rev Scott Taylor, UU minister, developer of Soul Matters

There is deep power in taking a break, honoring your body and actively participating in your deprogramming from grind culture. We have been brainwashed to be violent towards our own bodies by pushing it to exhaustion... Rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy. ~Tricia Hersey b. 1974, American poet, performance artist, and activist

Black joy is *not* this toxic positivity where we force ourselves to ignore the realities of the world and avoid the problems in our life. It's a moment of reflection and happiness in which we are able to tell ourselves there is more to this life and world than just pain... Part of Black joy is a hope that things will soon get better and another part of it is a celebration of still being around, still being here. ~Miracle Jones b. 1988, Community organizer and activist

Presence is far more intricate and rewarding an art than productivity. Ours is a culture that measures our worth as human beings by our efficiency, our earnings, our ability to perform this or that. The cult of productivity has its place, but worshiping at its altar daily robs us of the very capacity for joy and wonder that makes life worth living. ~Maria Popova b.1984, Bulgarian born, American based essayist, author, and poet

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 or the readings.

(After each person has shared, this can be 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:

Every day is a renewal, every morning the daily miracle. This joy you feel is life.
~Gertrude Stein 1874-1946, American novelist and poet

Announcements / Plans

Personal Check Out: As we leave 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.*