



## **Together / Apart**

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Based on session by First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA, September 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:**

Across the distance, the light from within me shines, sending love to all

Across the distance, your light is fuel that warms me and helps to keep my own light burning

Together, we keep the flame of community burning bright. ~ Laura Thompson

### **Questions to prompt and guide discussion:**

1. Who and what have you missed due to the pandemic? What substitutes have you found for former activities? As time has passed who and what have you added to your expanded bubble?
2. What challenges have you had to deal with either from living alone or living in close quarters with a small set of people? Have you explored any new boundaries, responsibilities or patterns? How have you found yourself to be hard for others to live with? How have you responded to that?
3. Have you found yourself reaching out any differently during this time? Have you reconnected with anyone?
4. How would you describe your support circle? Where and how did you find its members?
5. What ideas have you added to your post-pandemic to do list in terms of interactions with co-workers, friends or family?

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

### **Readings- Words from the Common Bowl: Quotes/Readings**

**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:**

We were never perfect. Yet, the journey we make together is perfect on this earth who was once a star and made the same mistakes as humans. We might make them again, she said. Crucial to finding the way is this: there is no beginning or end. You must make your own map.

~Joy Harjo, *A Map to the Next World: Poems and Tales*

### **Announcements/Plans**

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

**Extinguish the Chalice**

## Readings

With the pandemic shelter-in-place, we have found ourselves in a much smaller circle of physical interaction than most of us normally choose. We may be living alone, with a pet, with housemates, with a partner, with young children or children who have moved back, or with extended family members or friends. For most of us, we are spending far more time at home than we are used to.

For all of us, our usual social interactions are limited. This can be a bigger deal if we are living alone. It is much harder for all of us to build and maintain relationships that have relied on casual interactions, whether that is with co-workers in the hallway, or with friends we see walking a dog, at the gym, chorus, or other activities we have built into our life patterns. In the absence of these casual interactions, almost any interaction must now be intentional.

If we are living with others, spending more hours together than we are used to, we may be dealing with limitations of space and time and patience. With enforced togetherness, and potentially more stresses from jobs, lack of jobs, educating children, dealing with illness, etc. it is much easier to get on each other's nerves. We may be discovering habits of our co-confinees that are challenging. At times we ourselves may be harder for others to live with. We may need to define new patterns and boundaries of time and space and responsibilities. Most of us have loved ones, whether friends or family, that do not live with us, whether across town or across the world. It is especially difficult in times of illness, sadness and celebration to not be able to be together. Perhaps we can help each other by sharing our struggles as well as creative ways in which we have managed to reach out and feel connected.

~ First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA

True friends stay with you no matter the distance or time that separates you from them.

~ Lance Reynald

How it felt to have the world moving beneath me, a hand gripping mine, knowing if I fell, at least I wouldn't do it alone.

~Sarah Dessen

The trust is the magnet in every relationship, without that you cannot win one's confidence; you will stay out of the circle.

~ Ehsan Sehgal

Sometimes it's easier to love people when there is a healthy distance between us.

~ Marianne Williamson

One sees qualities at a distance and defects at close range.

~ Victor Hugo

Just as we expect others to value our boundaries, it's equally important for us to respect the boundaries of others.

~ Laurie Buchanan

If we don't have each other, we go crazy with loneliness. When we do, we go crazy with togetherness.

~ Stephen King