



Justice, Equity, and Compassion – UU Second Principle

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Covenant Group Session Plan

Session adapted from materials by Countryside Church UU, Palatine, IL., Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA. Revised by Paula Massey, April 2022

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.

Opening Words: We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote: Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. UU Second Principle

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

Readings: Compiled from a variety of sources. (See next page).

Questions to consider after the readings to help promote and guide discussion:

1. Think about a time when you or someone else spoke or acted for justice in a way that made a difference; how did this story inspire you.
2. What are you most passionate about regarding justice, and why?
3. Think about a time when you experienced or witnessed inequity? What actions can you take that could help reduce this lack of fairness or justice?
4. What inspires you to feel compassion for those who are suffering from injustice or other cause of pain?
5. Is it easier to feel compassion for others than for yourself? How do you practice self-compassion?

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

Sharing: This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no interrupting, no fixing, and no advising.

(This is usually a good time to take a brief break.)

Open Discussion: This is a time to respond to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts on the topic.

Closing Reading:

I am only one. But still, I am one. I cannot do everything, But still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.

Edward Everett Hale, *Singing the Living Tradition*, Reading #457

Announcements/Plans

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

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.

Readings

Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations points us toward something beyond inherent worth and dignity. It points us to the larger community. It gets at collective responsibility. It reminds us that treating people as human beings is not simply something we do one-on-one, but something that has systemic implications and can inform our entire cultural way of being. Compassion is something that we can easily act on individually. We can demonstrate openness, give people respect, and treat people with kindness on our own. But we need one another to achieve equity and justice.

~Rev. Emily Gage, Unity Temple, Chicago, IL (read more from Emily in *The Seven Principles in Word and Worship*, ed. Ellen Brandenburg)

However many holy words you read, however many you speak, what good will they do if you do not act on upon them? ~ Buddha

Love cannot remain by itself—it has not meaning, Love has to be put into action and that action is service. Whatever form we are, able or disabled, rich or poor, It is not how much we do, But how much love we put into the doing. A lifelong sharing of love with others. ~Mother Teresa

Until the great mass of the people shall be filled with the sense of responsibility for each other's welfare, social justice can never be attained. ~Helen Keller, American author, political activist, and lecturer.

There is a higher court than courts of justice and this is the court of conscience. It supersedes all other courts. ~Mahatma Gandhi, Indian nationalist and spiritual leader.

Activism is the rent I pay for living on this planet." ~ Alice Walker

We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we can not foresee. ~Marian Wright Edelman

Justice is possible without equality, I believe, because of compassion and understanding. If I have compassion, then if I have more than you, which is unequal, I will still do the just thing by you. ~bell hooks

Compassion literally means to 'suffer with', which implies a basic mutuality in the experience of suffering. The emotion of compassion springs from the recognition that the human experience is imperfect.

~Kristin Neff, Author and Professor of Educational Psychology

When we come into contact with the other person, our thoughts and actions should express our mind of compassion, even if that person says and does things that are not easy to accept. We practice in this way until we see clearly that our love is not contingent upon the other person being lovable. ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

You can have compassion for yourself-which is not self-pity. You're simply recognizing that 'this is tough, this hurts,' and bringing the same warmhearted wish for suffering to lessen or end that you would bring to any dear friend grappling with the same pain, upset, or challenges as you. ~Rick Hanson, Psychologist

Justice will not be served until those who unaffected are as outraged as those who are. ~Benjamin Franklin

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has. ~Margaret Mead