



## **Welcoming**

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Covenant Group Session Plan

Based on material from Soul Matters-Small Group-The Gift of Welcome- September 2023

Compiled by Denise Frick, September 2023

**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:** Share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

### **Opening Reading**

This is going to sound crazy. Say yes to everything. Accept [and welcome in] all offers. Go along with the plan. Support someone else's dream. Say: yes"; "right"; "sure"; "I will"; "okay"; "of course"; "YES!" ... When the answer to all questions is yes, you enter a new world, a world of action, possibility, and adventure.

~Patricia Ryan Madson

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.  
Hebrews 13.1 - Christianity

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

*This list of discussion questions is an aid for deep reflection. They are meant to take you somewhere. Read through the list 2-3 times until a question sticks out for you and captures your attention, or as some faith traditions say, until one of the questions "shimmers."*

1. What's one of the biggest changes you've welcomed into your life that few people know about? Who surprisingly tried to stand in the way of that change? Who surprisingly supported the change?
2. Has welcoming change gotten easier or harder as you've grown older? What do you know now about welcoming in the present moment that you didn't know when you were younger?
3. Who welcomed you in when you needed it most? How has that gift changed you? What would you say to the person if you had the chance?
4. What if, as some say, God is the force that disrupts our comfortable plans and notions? What if wholeness and holiness only leak into our lives when we welcome those moments of life being turned on its head?
5. What part of yourself is hardest to welcome in and embrace with compassion: Your vulnerable self? Your flawed self? Your easily frightened self? Your angry self?
6. What new ideas have you welcomed in since you've been a UU?

### **Readings – see below**

**Sitting in Silence** (Reflect on questions and readings, as you prepare for sharing)

**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.

**(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:**

The Arabs used to say, When a stranger appears at your door, feed him for three days before asking who he is, where he's come from, where he's headed. That way, he'll have strength enough to answer.

Or, by then you'll be such good friends you don't care...

~Naomi Shihab Nye

**Announcements/Plans**

**Personal Check Out:** As we close this meeting, 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.*

**Readings:**

He drew a circle that shut me out--Heretic, a rebel, a thing to flout. But Love and I had the wit to win: We drew a circle that took him in!

~Edwin Markham

[Hospitality] is the first step toward dismantling the barriers of the world. Hospitality is the way we turn a prejudiced world around one heart at a time.

~Joan D Chittister

Jung once said he began calling God all those "things which cross my willful path violently and recklessly, all things which upset my subjective views, plans and intentions, and change the course of my life for better or for worse." The divine is that power which disrupts everything. What if our practice were to court a similar holy disruption? To welcome in everything which challenges my perspective on how the world works, which upsets all the plans I have for myself, and turns them on their heads?

~Christine Valters Paintner

We belong to every part of our lives and every part of our lives belongs to us. Even the failures. The cruelty. The betrayals. The addictions. The cowardice. Until we embrace and welcome back those scared and tender parts with the kindness and forgiveness we so generously give to others, we will never be whole. We will never be home.

~Rev. Scott Tayler

It's amazing really. As a human being all you have to do is enumerate exactly the way you don't feel at home in the world, and the moment you've uttered the exact dimensionality of your exile, you are already on your way home.

~David Whyte

I believe every inch of America is sacred, from sea to shining sea. I believe we make it holy by who we welcome and by how we relate to each other. Call it my Muslim eyes on the American project. "We made you different nations and tribes that you may come to know one another," says the Qur'an.

~Eboo Patel