



Where I'm From

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville , SC

Covenant Group Session Plan

Adapted by Jennifer Lathrop from UUCA Time to Write

March 2019

Welcome, Chalice Lighting: Let our sharing together provide a place where memories are rooted, where mysteries are pondered, where dreams are nourished, where love is freely given, where failures are owned and accepted, where sorrows are transformed, where our lives are deepened, challenged and uplifted and where we can share the gift of laughter. Let this be such a time and place.

~Adapted from Rev. David E. Bumbaugh

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

Opening Reading:

We tell ourselves stories in order to live ~ Joan Didion

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What stories did your “elders” pass down to you? How have they influenced your life and how you see your role?
2. When has re-telling or re-writing of your story healed or saved you?
3. What is a story from childhood that guided you?
4. Have you experienced a ‘plot twist’ in your own life?

Silence

Readings – see below

Where I'm From Writing: Use the template provided below and create your own “Where I'm From” Poem. Share if you wish with the group.

Sharing - Deep listening--no cross talk. Everyone has a chance to speak once before anyone speaks twice. Each person shares as he or she feels ready, and it is OK to pass. When others speak, do not respond with words. Attentive body language, listening deeply and accepting what they are saying without thinking how you want to react are ways to honor our covenant to each other.

Break

Open Discussion: During this time, everyone shares freely, enlarging on and reacting to others' ideas. However, be careful not to interrupt or finish people's sentences.

Check out: As we close today, what do you want to be a part of your story this week?

Closing reading:

Listening is soul work. It can help the living find the meaning to go on in the midst of trying circumstances, and it can help the dying accept the brevity of their lives. Without listening, there can be no story. And without stories, we cannot complete the unfinished work of healing. ~ *Richard Stone, The Healing Art of Storytelling*

Announcements/Plans

Extinguish the Chalice

Readings

There are no true stories; we are making up every one of them. ~ *Pema Chodron*

There are only true stories. We are discovering the truth in them. ~ *Christina Baldwin*

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you. ~ *Maya Angelou*

Think about every memorial service you've attended. When they read the eulogy about the person's life and accomplishment that is just the "what" of their life. The things people want to hear at a memorial service, the thing that brings comfort, stirs memories, invites tears and laughter, are the stories. The novelist Edmund White says, "When a person dies a library is burned." The stories become the "how" of a life, and that is how, over time, we remember the person who is gone. ~ *Liz Hill, Soul Matters minister*

We are the stories we tell ourselves. ~ *Shekhar Kapur*

Where I'm From Template:

I am from _____ (specific ordinary item)
From _____ and _____ (product names)
I am from the _____ (description of your home)
_____ (a detail about your home – a smell, taste, or feel)
I am from the _____ (plant, flower, nature item)
The _____ (plant or tree)
Whose _____ (description of the above) I remember
As if they were my own

I'm from _____ and _____ (a family tradition and family trait)
From _____ and _____ (names of family members)
I'm from _____ and _____ (family habits)
And from _____ (family habit)

I'm from _____ and _____ (things you were told as a child)
And _____ (a song or saying you heard as a child)
I'm from _____ (a family tradition/religious tradition)
I'm from _____ (place of birth) and _____ (family ancestry or nationality)

_____ and _____ (family foods)
From _____ (a story about a family member)
_____ (detail about the story or person)
_____ (description of family momentos, pictures, or treasures)
_____ (location of momentos)

I am from those moments _____ (how you feel)

Where I'm From By George Ella Lyon

I am from clothespins,
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
I am from the dirt under the back porch.
(Black, glistening, it tasted like beets.)
I am from the forsythia bush
the Dutch elm
whose long-gone limbs I remember as if they were my own.
I'm from fudge and eyeglasses,
from Imogene and Alafair.
I'm from the know-it-alls and the pass-it-ons,
from Perk up! and Pipe down!
I'm from He restoreth my soul
with a cottonball lamb and ten verses I can say myself.
I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,
fried corn and strong coffee.
From the finger my grandfather lost to the auger,
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.
Under my bed was a dress box spilling old pictures,
a sift of lost faces to drift beneath my dreams.
I am from those moments-- snapped before I budded – leaf-fall from the family tree.