**COURAGE**

Greenville UU Fellowship Covenant Group Session Plan

(Adapted from session by the First UU Congregation of Ann Arbor, Michigan)

* (Facilitator’s: see advance prep note at end of session.)

**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 Reading**

The courage of very ordinary people is all that stands between us and the dark.

~ Pam Brown, Australian poet (born 1948)

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

**Readings from the common bowl** (See Readings at end of session)

**Questions to prompt and guide sharing and discussion**

(use of stones adapted from Joyce Rupp, The Circle of Life)

Please choose a stone from the table and hold it in your hands for the sharing of courage stories. Please share one or more of your responses to these questions:

1. Think of a time in your life when courage was needed, whether it was accessible or not, and tell the story of that time.
2. What challenges are you facing in your life that may test your courage?
3. What might be calling you next that would require courage?
4. Who or what has helped inspire your courage?

**Silence**

**Sharing:** (Deep listening--no cross talk) Please share your response to one or more of the session questions.

**Passing the Stones**

The stones are now passed to the left at the same time. Hold each stone for a brief time, warm it, and silently place a blessing on it. Then pass it on to the person to your left. Continue passing the stones until all the stones return to their original place. (Each person takes their courage stone home with them.)

**Open Discussion:** (Cross talk allowed) This is a time to respond to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.

**Announcements/Plans**

**Personal Check Out:**

*How would you like to be held in heart and mind before we meet again?*

**Closing Reading:**

May the light around us guide our footsteps, and hold us fast to the best and most righteous that we seek.  May the darkness around us nurture our dreams, and give us rest so that we may give ourselves to the work of our world.  Let us seek to remember the wholeness of our lives, the weaving of light and shadow in this great and astonishing dance in which we move.

~Kathleen McTigue, UU Minister, Dir of the UU College of Social Justice, UU Service Committee

**Extinguish the Chalice**

**Readings**

Courage, by the way, is an interesting word that typically means something about physical or mental strength or bravery. Its roots, however, go to the Latin and French words for "heart." I have heard it said that the suffix of the word, "age," means something like "wisdom." If you put the two together, you get "the wisdom of the heart."

~ Russell Bishop, Why You Should Never Defend, Explain or Justify, Huffington Post [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/russell-bishop/defend-explainjustify\_b\_832000.html]

Courage is not just physical bravery. History books tell colorful tales of social activists, such as Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, who chose to speak out against injustice at great personal risk. Entrepreneurs such as Steve Jobs and Walt Disney, who took financial risks to follow their dreams and innovate, are like modernday knights, exemplifying the rewards and public accolades that courage can bring. There are different kinds of courage, ranging from physical strength and endurance to mental stamina and innovation.

~ Melanie A. Greenberg, The Mindful Self-Express

The most courageous act is still to think for yourself. Aloud.

~ Coco Chanel, quoted in Believing Ourselves by Armand Eisen

It takes courage… to endure the sharp pains of self discovery rather than to choose to take the dull pain of unconsciousness that would last the rest of our lives.

~ Marianne Williamson, Return to Love

Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore.

~ Philip Stanhope, Lord Chesterfield, British statesman (1694-1773)

I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It’s when you know you are licked before you begin but you begin anyway and see it through no matter what. ~ Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird

Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply brings you courage. ~ Lao Tzu, Chinese philosopher (born between 600 and 300 BCE)

It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are.

~ e.e.cummings, American poet (1894-1962)

Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one’s courage.

~ Anais Nin, French-born author and diarist (1903-1977)

Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear.

~ Mark Twain, American author (1835-1910)

Speak your mind, even if your voice shakes.

~ Maggie Kuhn, American social activist (1905-1995)

History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, However, if faced with courage, need not be lived again.

~ Maya Angelou, Inaugural Poem, 1993

The ideals which have lighted my way, and time after time have given me new courage to face life cheerfully, have been kindness and beauty and truth…

~ Albert Einstein, German-born physicist (1879-1955)

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.

~ Nelson Mandela, South African statesman (born 1918)

* **Facilitators’ Note:**

In this session, the group sharing includes an opportunity for each person to select a stone and hold it while they share their stories of courage. The stones are passed around the circle after stories of courage have been told, and each group member will be invited to take their stone home with them. These small stones are available from Kathleen or you can gather them yourself.