**Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship**

**Covenant Group Session Plan**

**Spiritual Journeys**

**Welcome and 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. Let this be such a time and place.

~*Adapted from Rev.David E. Bumbaugh*

**Personal Check In:** Briefly share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now. (Let’s all help each other to practice Deep Listening: No interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting anyone straight.)

**Opening Words:**

I imagine that an evolving faith–as ours is and I trust always will be–brings with it the possibility of faltering words, changing viewpoints, open-ended questions and answers. The challenge before us is to creatively find a means to capture our religious values and beliefs in words and symbols that others (and we) can understand. ~*Rev. Barbara Wells, UU Minister*

**Questions to Prompt and Guide Discussion:**

1. Share some of the important steps on your path of spiritual, religious, or worldview exploration.
2. How have your beliefs changed through your life?
3. What values, beliefs, traditions, or practices from this path are still meaningful to you today?
4. Tell about a “spiritual” or “peak experience” you have had.
5. What spiritual questions or practices do you long to explore?

**Readings:**

A spiritual practice is any regular, intentional activity that serves to significantly deepen the quality and content of your relationship with the miracle of life.

~Scott Alexander, UU Minister, *Everyday Spiritual Practice: Simple Pathways for Enriching Your Life.*

Your life is your practice. Your spiritual practice does not occur someplace other than in your life right now, and your life is nowhere other than where you are. You are looking for answers, insight, and wisdom that you already possess. Live the life in front of you, be the life you are, and see what you find out for yourself.

~Karen Maezen Miller, Zen Buddhist Priest.

The kind of spirituality I value is one in which you get great joy out of contributing to life, not just sitting and meditating, although meditation is certainly valuable. But from the meditation, from the resulting consciousness, I would like to see people in action creating the world that they want to live in.

~Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD, Author, Founder of Center for Nonviolent Communication.

Many of the people who attend religious services in our society are not interested in theology, want nothing too exotic and dislike the idea of change. They find the established rituals provide them with a link with tradition and give them a sense of security.

~Karen Armstrong, British author and commentator known for her books on comparative religion. A former Roman Catholic religious sister, she went from a conservative to a more liberal and mystical Christian faith.

We all - whether naturalists, atheists, Buddhists, or Christians - see the world through the grid of an interpretive framework - and ultimately this interpretive framework is religious in nature, even if not allied with a particular institutional religion.

~James K. A. Smith, Canadian-American philosopher.

God is a metaphor for that which transcends all levels of intellectual thought. It’s as simple as that.

~Joseph Campbell, American mythologist, writer and lecturer, best known for his work in comparative mythology and comparative religion. His work covers many aspects of the human experience.

**Silence**

**Sharing:** (Deep listening--no cross talk) This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Please share one or more of your responses to the session questions.

**Break**

**Open Discussion:** (Cross talk allowed) 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 and remember: No interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight.

**Announcements / Plans**

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

**Closing Words**

Grateful for the opportunity to share this time and space together, we prepare to go now our separate ways, hopefully renewed by the energy of each other’s company, hopefully invigorated by the opportunity to communicate compassionately. As we have grown while we’re together, may we also grow while we are apart, may we be strengthened by the inspiration of the connection which we forged together today. And may we remain so strengthened, until we meet again.

~Vid Axel , Consultant, Trainer, Coach, Communicating Compassionately

**Extinguish the Chalice**