

UNTARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF THE RESTORATION

Facilitator's Covenant Group Session One Outline

**THEME: COMMUNITY**

**[5 min] Facilitator Welcome and Self Introductions:**

This is the first meeting of the group. Start with a welcome from the facilitator. Invite everyone to say their name only and let them know that there will be a time for self introductions.

**[5min] Opening Ritual:**

Reading and Kindling of the Flame

*Though our knowledge is incomplete, our truth partial, and our loves imperfect, we believe  
that new light is ever waiting to break into our hearts and minds to enlighten our ways;  
that there is mutual strength in willing cooperation*

*that the bonds of love keep open gates of freedom*

**[Rev Napoleon Lovely]**

**(Light Chalice)**

*This is our religious home.*

*We bring to this place our greatest strengths,*

*Our deepest doubts and fears, and all the mysteries unknown and unfathomed.*

*What is this golden flame that binds us to all that has been*

*All that is here and now, and all that will ever be?*

*Dare we hope our greatest hopes? Dare we build them on a foundation of our love and will?*

*Here the sacred flame is lighted. Here the tender soul yearns. Here the holy fire burns.*

*It is formless, yet eternal. It flashes into the depths of our souls.*

*It warms what is cold. It lights what was dark.*

*It speaks the truth. It touches gently. So be it forever.*

**[Rev. Mark Allstrom]**

**[10 mins] – Check in**

One minutes each. “What was the best part of your day today?”

**[30 mins]**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE COVENANT GROUP DISCUSSION PROCESS**

Before the readings explain the discussion process emphasizing that it is the discussion process that makes this a Covenant Group. *See Co-facilitator Handout #2.* Ask the participants to honor the following ground rules:

- ✓ Listen to each other with respect, without interrupting to comment or ask questions.  
*Read together Participant Handout #2 on Listening*
- ✓ Speak about your own thoughts, reactions, feelings, and experiences, not those of others.  
*Read together Participant Handout #3 Guideline that Enhance Discussions*
- ✓ During your turn, do not comment on what others have said before you.
- ✓ After everyone has shared there will be a time to ask clarifying questions followed by a short non-judgemental and non-confrontational discussion using “I-statements”

**[50 mins] –**

**The Discussion Topic: “Community”**

UNTARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF THE RESTORATION

Facilitator's Covenant Group Session One Outline

***THEME: COMMUNITY***

***Topic Discussion Reading One (responsive)***

What is precious is you in others, others in you.

*We enter into the being and lives of others, as they do into ours.*

Sometimes momentarily.

*Sometimes enduringly.*

This is what love essentially is, to be part of one another.

*In simple sympathy, in close friendship, in shared stories, in sorrow and in joy.*

**[Facilitator Note: Allow 1 minute for silent reflection]**

***Topic Discussion Reading Two***

(Adaptation of reading by Clarissa Pinkola Estes in *Women Who Run with the Wolves*)

I once heard a story from an old African-American man in the mid south. He came out of an alley as I was sitting amidst the graffiti of the inner city "park." Some people would call him crazy, for he spoke to anyone and no one.

He shuffled along with one finger held out as though to test the wind's direction. *Cuentistas* recognizes such persons as having been touched by gods. In our tradition, we called such a man *El Bulto*, The Bundle, for souls such as he carry certain kind of ware and show it to any who will look, anyone who has the eye to see it and the sense to shelter it. It was he who gave me this story: It is about a certain kind of ancestral transmission. He called the story "One Stick-Two Stick." "This is the way of the old African kings," he whispered.

In the story, an old man is dying, and calls his people to his side. He gives a short, sturdy stick to each of his many offspring, wives, and relatives. "Break the stick," he instructs them. With some effort, they snap their sticks in half. "This how it is when a soul is alone without anyone. They can be easily broken." The old man next gives each of his kin another stick, and says, "This is how I would like you to live after I pass. Put your sticks together in a bundle of twos and threes. Now, break these bundles in half." No one can break the sticks when there are two or more in a bundle. The old man smiles. "We are strong when we stand with another souls. When we are with another, we cannot be broken.

**[Facilitator Note: Allow 1 minute for silent reflection]**

***Discussion Questions:***

1. What in these two reading caught your attention?
2. How do you cultivate a friendships?
3. What is the meaning of community to you?

***[Note]: - as the facilitator you need to decide or ask the group to decide how they want to end the discussion and move into the business section of the meeting.***

UNTARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF THE RESTORATION

Facilitator's Covenant Group Session One Outline

***THEME: COMMUNITY***

[5 mins] - *Break*

[30 mins] – **Business**

1. ***[No discussion]***

Review the three (3) Covenants *AS INFORMATION ONLY*: Have participants take this information home and review for business session during next meeting. *Given this information it is okay if a participant decides to leave the group because they cannot participate in the group with these agreements.*

2. ***Community Project: [Present in Own Your Language]***

Each Covenant Group picks a project to do for the church or in the community on behalf of the church. Each group gets to choose their project, but it must be a project that all members do together at the same time. *Facilitators can participate but cannot organize.*

[2 mins]

**Preparation for Next Gathering:**

Ask them to bring an object that's meaningful to them. It might be an object they treasure, find meaning in or would like to have people know about. It might be symbolic of some part of their life journey or give others some special insight about them.

These objects will be placed on a table during the gathering and participants will have an opportunity to explain why the object is significant to them. (Optional idea: Take a picture of the objects on the table at the end of the meeting and make a copy for each member.)

[12 min] – **Closing Check-Out**

Likes

Wishes

Expressing Thanks to One Another

[4 min] - **Closing Ritual**

- Reading and Extinguishing the Chalice

**Closing Reading**

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings,  
But connected, in mystery and miracle, to the universe, to each  
other. May we know that we are good; that we are loved,  
*and most of all, that we are not alone.*