

Small Group Ministry Session Plan
Holding and Supporting Ourselves and Our Groups
Unitarian Universalist Community Church, Augusta, ME, February 13, 2022

Note regarding this Session Plan:

Pastoral Ministry Team and Small Group Ministry Committee would like to support groups and participants during times of death of group members or relations.

Background:

- All of our Small Groups have been impacted by death over the years, and recently, at least three SGM members have died in a short period of time.
- The Pastoral Ministry Team and a Small Group Ministry Committee offer support to SGM members as they grieve such a loss and celebrate a life.
- Members of the PMT have offered to facilitate the “Holding and Supporting Ourselves” session to relieve the SGM facilitator from that role, enabling full participation in the session. PMT team, coordinated with the minister, may be able to offer additional support as needed.

Opening Words:

We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted...when we are in trouble and afraid...when we are in despair, in temptation, and need to be recalled to our best selves again. We need one another when we would accomplish some great purpose and cannot do it alone...in the hour of our successes, when we look for someone to share our triumphs...in the hour of our defeat when with encouragement we might endure and stand again. We need one another when we come to die and would have gentle hands prepare us for the journey. All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us.

-Adapted from George Odell, Reading #468 *Singing the Living Tradition* (Eugene,OR)

It's hard to know what to say to people in mourning. Say something if you can and if you don't know what to say, just be there. It is not necessary to say anything. Show you care enough to drop your cares and help another person bear their burdens. (LaCrosse, WI)

Check-in/Sharing: How is it with you today?

Topic/Activity:

Small group ministry is an integral part of ministry for the group participants and in the congregation. Many groups, especially long-term groups, experience deaths among group members and families over the years. Each situation brings a unique experience of being supportive and being supported. The Small Group Ministry Committee (SGMC) and the Pastoral Ministry Team (PMT) invites group participants to share what is helpful to groups members and to acknowledge their contributions.

We each come from our own perspective related to life experiences with death, viewpoints of mortality and immortality, and what has been helpful (or not) around the death. Sharing has both common and divergent points. From the sharing, we can enhance the support that can be provided by both the groups themselves and the broader church community.

In sharing, remember losses in the group or among family members over the years.

How was the group involved?

What were the gifts of the group?

What support was available from the group? For the group?

What would have been helpful?

What has been the affect of the loss for the group?

Were communications clear, comfortable with the family and within the congregation?

Checking out/Likes and Wishes: How was the session for you?

Closing Words: When death or dying comes calling at the door, like a bracing wind it clears our being of pettiness. It connects us to others. More alert to life's fragility, we reawaken to life's preciousness. To be fully human is to care and attending to death prompts the most eloquent form of caring imaginable. -*Rev. Forrest Church*, Unitarian Universalist minister (Eugene, OR)

Resources: Session Plans from:

UU Church in Eugene, OR: Death and Dying series, 4 Bereavement

UU Fellowship, LaCrosse, WI. Condolences