

Let Us Walk Together

Unitarian University Community Church, Augusta, ME, Rev. Helen Zidowecki, Sept. 2017

Opening Words:

Come, Let us walk together.....

But wait. I may walk too fast or too slow for you, or a different distance than you.

Sometimes we may walk with a lilt or a skip, and other times almost dragging.

Hmmmm. If I'm skipping and you're dragging, may we allow for these differences.

Maybe – just maybe -- we can adjust our tempo to feel gentleness in our steps.

May we pause, rest and ponder.

May we reflect on our walking together – or apart.

It's OK that we walk at different speed or distance.

Maybe I will see or hear or perceive something new by walking with you, and you with me.

Come, Let us walk together.....

May our walking together be a ministry.

May we bring our own selves to be ministered to,

Our feelings and fears and needs.

May we bring the gifts of our beings to minister to each other.

May our connections deepen our spiritual journeys through community.

Check-in/Sharing: How is it with you today? What would you like from the group today?

Topic/Activity:

Small Group Ministry is about building a community where participants feel comfortable in sharing to a degree that enhances life journey. This session was developed from Deep Fun, by Jennifer Martin and Galen Moor, UUA Youth Office, and *Building Community in Youth Groups* by Denny Rydberg, 1985. The original concept of steps to Building Community is presented as components in the building process. Helen Zidowecki

The session plan itself invites building community. The greeting as the group comes together and the opening ritual is *bonding*. The check-in or sharing is *opening up*. The response of the group to each participant is *affirming*. The *stretching* and *going deeper* relates to the topic itself, the way the questions are asked, and the sharing that occurs. Community occurs each time the group meets.

Bonding Building community breaks barriers to relationships in the group. As each person is accepted and welcomed by others, they begin to identify as part of the group.

*How do we approach a gathering -- with eagerness, a sense of adventure, or with hesitation?

*What are we bringing from previous experiences, and what can be left behind?

Opening Up When person shares from life experiences, and perceives genuine interest, trust develops. The more empathetically a group listens, the more secure an individual feels in a group. People share to the degree they feel comfortable.

*How do we perceive each other when we first meet?

*How do our perceptions influence our entry into the group?

*What happens if any of us does not feel respect, interest or trust?

Affirming Interactions that affirm leave warm feelings about the group and each person. Affirmation encourages sharing further.

*How would each of us like to be affirmed in the group?

*How can we affirm each other?

*How can we be sure that everyone has been heard?

Stretching. Facing and overcoming difficulties give people the confidence that they can cope with everyday problems.

*How can we, the group, create an atmosphere where any of us feel comfortable enough to expose vulnerabilities to the group?

*Do we feel comfortable enough to ask the group for what we need?

*As a group, can we define what we can give from the group?

Deeper Sharing. The group can help the member while holding the individual accountable for decisions, remaining supportive throughout the process.

*How can we become comfortable enough to ask —and accept -- questions that encourage deeper understanding, and remain supportive?

*How can we walk with each other, yet continue our own spiritual growth?

Check-out/Likes and Wishes: How was the session for you? What can you take into your ongoing life?

Closing Words: #468 We Need One Another, George Odell (Can be read by one person, responsively, or “around the group.”)

We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted.

We need one another when we are in trouble and afraid.

We need one another 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.

We need one another in the hour of success, when we look for someone to share our triumphs.

We need one another in the hour of 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.