



A SESSION FOR SMALL GROUPS FOR NATIONAL STANDING ON THE SIDE OF LOVE DAY

SUPPLIES

- Chalice
- Candle
- Matches
- Altar cloth
- Nametags and markers
- Copies of Singing the Living Tradition, or photocopies of 318 “We Would Be One.”

TIPS FOR PREPARATION

Set up the space in advance of the meeting. Arrange chairs in a circle, with the altar cloth, chalice, and candle at the center of the circle.

CHALICE LIGHTING

O light of life,
Be kindled again in our hearts
As we meet together this day
To celebrate the joy of human community
Seeking a wholeness that extends beyond ourselves.

—Rev. Samuel A. Trumbore, Unitarian Universalist Minister, Albany, NY. **Source:** 1997
UUMA Worship Materials Collection.

INITIAL GUIDELINES

If your group has not developed a covenant together at one of its previous meetings, you are encouraged to begin by developing a minimal list of behavioral guidelines that everyone can affirm for their participation in the group.

Begin by presenting two simple ground rules:

- Share the floor and refrain from interrupting
- Keep personal stories confidential

Clarify if there will be exceptions to this confidentiality. For example, are you mandated by the state or by your conscience to report any instances of child or elder abuse that you hear of? If so it is important to be open about this mandate.

Ask the group to affirm these initial ground rules before proceeding.



CHECK-IN

All participants are invited to share, one by one, how they have been doing. Participation is voluntary and facilitators can set a time limit for sharing, e.g. two minutes per person. Some groups find it valuable to go around in a circle for initial sharing, and then go around the circle a second time for participants to share ideas and responses sparked by others' check-ins.

WORDS FOR MEDITATION

Love, like truth and beauty, is concrete. Love is not fundamentally a sweet feeling; not, at heart, a matter of sentiment, attachment, or being “drawn toward.” Love is active, effective, a matter of making reciprocal and mutually beneficial relation with one’s friends and enemies.

Love creates righteousness, or justice, here on earth. To make love is to make justice. As advocates and activists for justice know, loving involves struggle, resistance, risk. People working today on behalf of women, blacks, lesbians and gay men, the aging, the poor in this country and elsewhere know that making justice is not a warm, fuzzy experience. I think also that sexual lovers and good friends know that the most compelling relationships demand hard work, patience, and a willingness to endure tensions and anxiety in creating mutually empowering bonds.

For this reason loving involves commitment.... Love is a choice — not simply, or necessarily, a rational choice, but rather a willingness to be present to others without pretense or guile. Love is a conversion to humanity — a willingness to participate with others in the healing of a broken world and broken lives. Love is the choice to experience life as a member of the human family, a partner in the dance of life, rather than as an alien in the world or as a deity above the world, aloof and apart from human flesh.

—Rev. Carter Heyward, Episcopal Priest and Theologian

FOCUS (WORDS TO BRING THE MEETING TOPIC IN TO FOCUS)

Today we explore the links between love and justice. We do this because Sunday, February 14th, 2010, is National Standing on the Side of Love Day. Our congregation will join other communities of faith across the country to celebrate a Valentine’s Day re-imagined. Love is about more than romance, greeting cards and chocolates. This week we celebrate love’s power to transform communities. National Standing on the Side of Love Day is part of the Standing on the Side of Love campaign, which seeks to harness love’s power to stop oppression. The Unitarian Universalist Association sponsors the campaign and we can all get involved by visiting www.StandingontheSideofLove.org.

Love is a complex topic. The word is used to describe the strong bond between family members, between romantic partners, between friends. Love is also used to describe a feeling we can have for all of humanity, or all of the earth – even for people, places, and animals we don’t know. Religious traditions through the ages have linked love with justice, drawing on the very human tendencies to treat those we love more generously and justly.



Here we'll talk about love's transforming power, each of us speaking from the heart about how we're moved to show love to our hurting society and our hurting world.

QUESTIONS

- Carter Heyward writes "Love creates righteousness, or justice, here on earth." Have you seen examples of this in your own life? If so, how?
- What are some ways you see yourself standing on the side of love?
- What are some ways you see your Unitarian Universalist congregation standing on the side of love? in the past, the present, and the future?
- What barriers do we face, individually or collectively, to standing publically on the side of love?
- Carter Heyward writes, "Love is a conversion to humanity—a willingness to participate with others in the healing of a broken world and broken lives." Where and how are you willing to participate in this healing?

LIKES & WISHES (A CLOSING "CHECK-OUT")

Participants are invited to "check-out," sharing what they liked about the meeting and also sharing "wishes"—ways the meeting could have been improved. It helps to phrase these comments lovingly and constructively, with the good of the group in mind. Saying "I liked _____" and "I wish _____" helps affirm the good things that are already happening and helps make space for more good things to happen when the group gathers next.

CLOSING WORDS

Close with the second verse of the hymn "We Would Be One," 318 in *Singing the Living Tradition*. If you do not know the tune, you may offer it as a spoken reading. It closes with the words "with love and justice strive to make us free."

CLOSING RITUAL

If your group has a traditional closing, offer it here. If not, invite the group to gather in a circle around the chalice. Introduce the closing with these or similar words:

I invite each of you who wishes to share a word or phrase that describes what it's like to stand on the side of love. Your word or phrase could describe a feeling, a concept, a value... something that speaks to the experience of standing on the side of love.