

**Small Group Ministry
Group Session Plan**

Opening Words:

Blessed is the fire that burns deep in the soul.
It is the flame of the human spirit
touched into being by the mystery of life.
It is the fire of reason;
The fire of compassion;
The fire of community;
The fire of justice;
The fire of faith.
It is the fire of love
burning deep in the human heart;
the divine glow in every life.

-Eric Heller-Wagner

Check-in

Reading: *Excerpt from Challenge of a Liberal Faith, George Marshall, Chapter 4, "The Religious Liberal Faces Life"*

A person's religion is not measured by the fervor of one's Sunday devotions, ones frequency at church meetings, or one's pious expression of faith. A genuine test of faith is how a person stands up in the face of some great grief, some unexpected tragedy, some harrowing experience, or some upsetting crisis. The most devout often stumble, while the presumed backslider measures up. During World War II some chaplains reported that religious faith was not measured by chapel attendance so much as by inner fortitude.

Too often the person whose faith depends on the dim religious light of a sanctuary or the soft tones of an organ gently soothing the harried emotions finds it is far removed from the actualities of the highways and byways, the dark street corners, the chill mortuary, or aseptic hospital bed. Often the frenzied and harried parents facing the turbulence of adolescent strivings find this faith inadequate as they struggle with these pressures. The modern adult at home and in business too often finds that constant demands of "decisions, decisions, decisions" wear down the resistance, so that one loses all sense of perspective, relationship, and serenity, thus acting impulsively without regard to values or primary concerns.

Religious liberalism can help. Here is a faith that is not external, but internal. The Unitarian Universalist church make no other offer than this: to help a person develop a faith that is within. Do not come to a Unitarian Universalist church to find religion, to learn beliefs, or to be given a faith. Come only when you reach a point where all external faiths are rejected and you are ready to begin with the bedrock of your own being, experience, and character to construct the faith that is meaningful to you.

Silent Meditation

Find a comfortable pose.

In the face of struggle, crisis, grief and despair, what is your internal faith?

What source of strength and wisdom is found in the bedrock of your being?

In the silence, allow a word or two arise from your still small voice within.

Let us enter into three minutes of silent meditation.

Topic:

Share the word or words that arose from the bedrock of your being,

What is the source of your faith as a Unitarian Universalist that helps you face life?

Sharing/ Deep Listening**Conversation****Likes & Wishes****Closing Words:**

Be ours a religion which, like sunshine, goes everywhere;
its temple, all space;
its shrine, the good heart;
its creed, all truth;
its ritual, works of love;
its profession of faith, divine living.

-Theodore Parker