Travel from Evergreen UU Fellowship, Marysville, Washington

From the Small Group Ministry Institute, The Mountain, August 2008:
Be the Change
Claiming Happiness
Facing Challenges
Forgiveness
Home
Hope
Responding to Violence

This I Believe
Submitted by our Titusville, NJ congregation.
Stewardship
Submitted by LaVerne Coan, Created for Roots and Wings Covenant Group Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Durham, NC
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
Be the Change
Small Group Ministry Institute, The Mountain, August 2008

Opening words:
Reading # 666, "The Legacy of Caring," Thandeka, Singing the Living Tradition,
First 2 and last 2 sections

Check-in:
What is alive in you at this moment?
OR
Briefly share a joy or sorrow that has happened in your life since we last met.

Introduction to Topic:
“We must be the change we wish to see in the world.” Gandhi

Life Questions:
What changes do you need/want to have happen inside yourself? In your relationships? In the world around you?

What have you done to make changes?
OR
What might you do to make these changes internally? Externally?

What keeps you from “being the change”?

Likes and Wishes: How did this session go for you?
OR
Share a word or phrase that says something about the way you feel as a result of our time together.

Closing Words:
To communicate is the beginning of understanding.
To feel is the beginning of self-growth.
To touch is the beginning of involvement.
To love is the beginning of all that will ever be.
   Nancy Ceranowicz
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
Claiming Happiness
Small Group Ministry Institute, The Mountain, August 2008

Opening Words:
"Happiness no only needs no justification, but it is the only final test of whether what I am doing is right for me. Only of course happiness is not the same as pleasure; it includes the pain of loving as well as the pleasure of finding." Joanna Field, A Life of One's Own

Check-in: How is it with you today?

Questions:
1. When you hear the word "happiness" what moments from your own life does it call to mind?

2. Why does happiness matter?

3. In what ways has happiness been, for you, a spiritual experience?

Closing:
"Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes real happiness. It is not obtained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose."

Helen Keller
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

Facing Challenges
Small Group Ministry Institute, The Mountain, August 2008

Opening Words:
“To Risk”, #658 in Singing the Living Tradition

Check-in: How are you today?

Questions or Activity:
1. What has been a major challenge in your life, and how did you find the strength to fact it?

2. Would you have handled it differently? If so, how?

3. Has this challenge changed you life? If so, how?

Closing words:
“Take Courage”, #698 Singing the Living Tradition
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

Home
Small Group Ministry Institute, The Mountain, August 2008

Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting (stanza from Home Sweet Home)
Mid pleasures and palaces though I may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there is no place like home.
A charm from the sky seems to hallow us there,
Which seek thro’ the world, is ne’er met with elsewhere.

Check In: What do you need to leave behind to be fully present here?

Revisiting the Covenant (as needed)

Centering
Time to become intentionally calm, centered and present
(for example, breathing exercise)

Topic
Hear these words from A Place of Meeting, by Eileen B. Karpeles (#733)

Out of wood and stone, Out of dreams and sacrifice, the People build a home.
Out of the work of their hands and hearts and minds, the People fashion a symbol and a reality.

A home may be where you can trust one another so surely that you can dare to share the deep fires that burst into anger as much as the sweet spring waters that swell into laughter.

Questions to spur thoughts
What does home mean to you?
Is it a physical place?
Where do you have to be to feel you are at home?
Have you ever felt homesick?

Check out
What are your likes and wishes about this session?

Closing (song, Home Sweet Home—Stephen Foster)
To thee I return over burdened with care,
The hearts dearest solace will smile on me there.
No more from that cottage again will I roam,
Be it ever so humble, there’s no place like home.
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

Hope
Small Group Ministry Institute, The Mountain, August 2008

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting
Spirit of Life and Love,
We have gathered here in
    search of answers to hard questions.
We have come in search of understanding,
    In search of community.
We have come in search of hope and healing.

Let this be a place not only of searching,
    But of discovery.
Let this be a place no only of learning,
    But of wisdom.
Let this be a place not only of meeting,
    But of connection.
And let this be a place where healing fosters giving,
    And hope fosters service.

Rev. Sue Ayer

Check-in: What would you like to share about how you are today?

Topic for sharing/listening:
1. What does hope mean to you?

2. When has your sense of hope been shaken?
   Describe what happened and how you responded.

3. From what do you draw hope in your personal life?

Closing:
Hope drifts up
Covering my soul
Such comfort.

D. Schmid, The Mountain Institute 2008

A fiery orange ball
The sun rises again today
My heart begins to warm

C Holt, The Mountain Institute 2008

My father-in-law spent 7 years in a Siberian prison camp after World War I. He told me that of all
the words he knows, the most important was HOPE. D. Schmid, The Mountain Institute 2008
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
Responding to Violence
Small Group Ministry Institute, The Mountain, August 2008

Opening Words
In the desolate hour, there is an outcry;
A clenching of the hands upon emptiness;
A burning pain of bereavement;
A weary ache of loss.
But anguish, like ecstasy, is not forever.
    A. Powel Davies, from Rejoice Together, Helen Pickett

Check-in: What are you leaving behind to be fully present?

Topic: Invite the group to reflect in silence between each question.
    1. What come to you when you hear the word “violence”?
    2. In your life how have you responded to violence?
    3. Share a response to violence that gives you hope.

Likes and Wishes: How did the session go for you?

Closing Song:
“There is More Love Somewhere,” Singing the Living Tradition #95
For each time that our greed has blinded us to the needs of others
We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.

For the selfishness which sets us apart and alone,
We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.

For falling short of the admonitions of the spirit,
We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.

For losing sight of our unity,
We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.

For those and for so many acts both evident and subtle which have fueled the illusion of separateness,
We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.”

Sharing Circles, First Universalist Church, Minneapolis, February 2002
SMALL GROUP MINISTRY
Forgiveness
Small Group Ministry Institute, The Mountain, August 2008

Opening Words:
"Let us open our minds and hearts to the place of quiet,
To the silent prayer for the healing of pain
And the soft, gentle coming of love."
Composite, The Mountain, 2008

Check-in:
What do I need to leave behind to be fully present here today?

Topic:
"Forgive me if along the way somewhere...I have killed your hopes and dreams...with my own disbelief in every thing good.
Forgive me if I could not see with your vision the beauty of this world and the infinite possibilities for peace.
Forgive me my restlessness...that I could not pause on the path...to allow wisdom to come forth.
Forgive me that I have not treated each new day...with the same ultimate joy that you know...for another chance to be worthy.
Forgive me for not listening...when the very atmosphere is so charged...with universal music...and ideas too many to grasp.
Forgive me my foolishness...that I have believed...there only existed those things...which I could see and touch.
Forgive me that I have not thought...deeply enough or outside the limits...of the ordinary mind...to believe and overcome.
Forgive me that I have not senses...the intense value of life...the infinitesimal beauty everywhere...in the smallest to the most majestic of God's creation.
Forgive me that I have not said thank you."

To everything There is a Season, Joyce Hifler, Doubleday & Co., 1969, p.22

Why is it so hard to ask for forgiveness?
Why is it so hard to forgive?
Was there a time in your life that forgiveness was of particular importance?
Why forgive?

Closing:
"A Litany of Atonement" by Robert Eller-Isaacs
Read as a responsive reading, with the group responding with the refrain.
"For remaining silent when a single voice would have made a difference
    We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.
For each time that our fears have made us rigid and inaccessible,
    We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.
For each time that we have struck out in anger without just cause,
    We forgive ourselves and each other; we begin again in love.