

## CREDO

### Chalice Lighting

We gather around this flame that symbolizes:

The truth we know and the truth we seek.

The community we share and the community we  
aspire to.

The learning that enables us and the mystery  
that encompasses.

Here we speak of languages of memory and hope.

Here we are welcomed, our journeys embraced and shared.

### Introductions

**Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.**

### Group Business

#### Shared Readings

Belief consists in accepting the affirmations of the soul;  
unbelief, in denying them. –Ralph Waldo Emerson

Beliefs have the power to create and the power to destroy.  
Human beings have the awesome ability to take any  
experience of their lives and create a meaning that  
disempowers them or one that can literally save their lives.  
–Anthony Robbins

If you don't have solid beliefs you cannot build a stable life.  
Beliefs are like the foundation of a building and they are the  
foundation to build your life upon. –Alfred Montapert

### Activity

#### Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Introduction to Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round I Share three or four of the words you circled on the  
front of the bulletin.

Round II Using insights you gained from doing the  
homework, talk about your beliefs, how you came to  
these beliefs, and how you share your beliefs with others.

Round III In this session, did you discover anything new  
about what you believe? What has been especially  
meaningful to you?

### Closing Words

The wise skeptic does not teach doubt but how to look for  
the permanent in the mutable and fleeting.

–Ralph Waldo Emerson

### Song

*Go Now in Peace*

### Group Business

Pass out homework for the next session.

### The Covenant

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group.
- to honor the group by letting the leader know if I will be absent.
- to avoid cross talk, giving feedback or trying to fix anyone
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others.
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and not tell other people's stories.
- to listen to what others share with an open heart, and to share deeply in my turn.

## Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Round I Something you learned about this topic as you read and went through the exercises. The facilitator may have a specific question for all to respond to. Share one or two sentences. Go around the circle. Before Round II leave some silence.

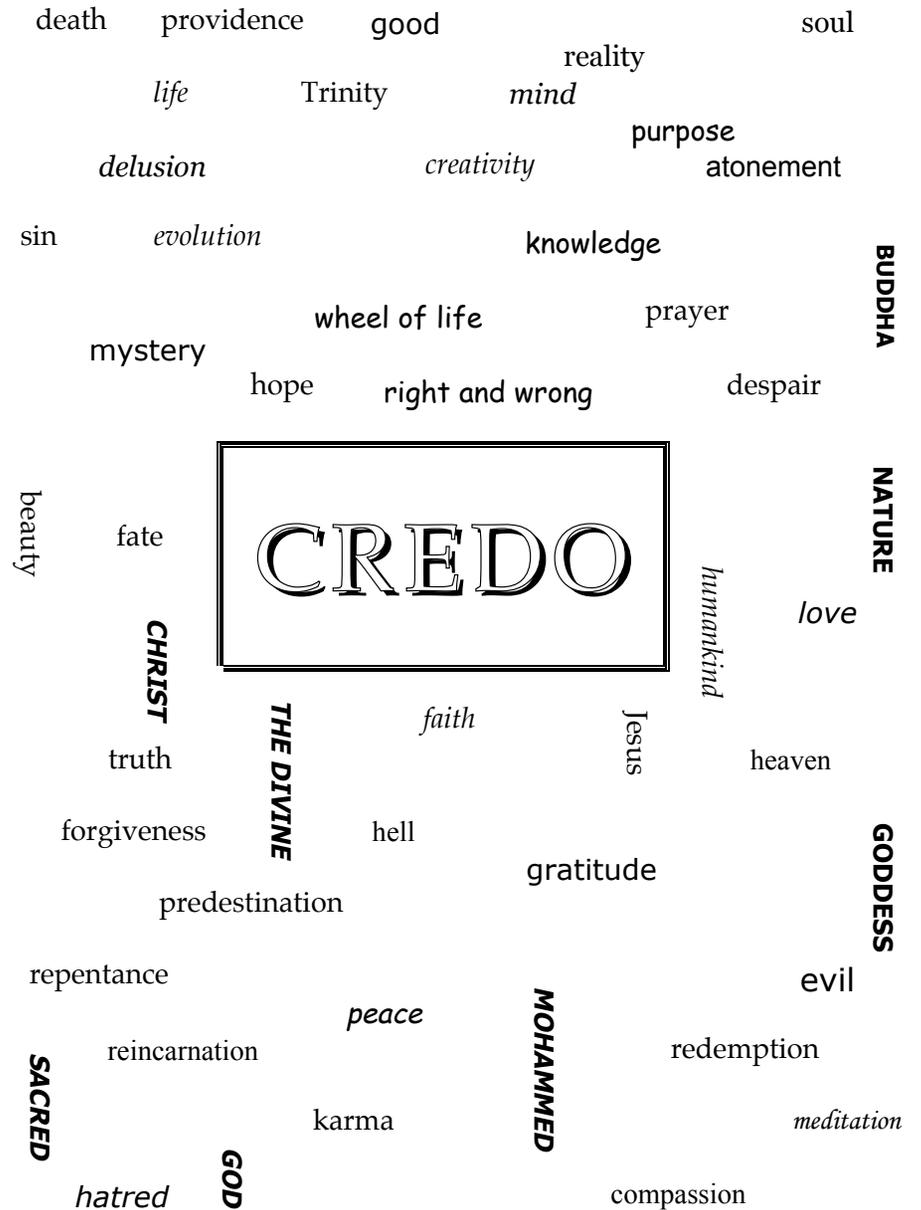
Round II Something you felt about this topic, a way you grew, something that touched you, a story you want to share...(in other words, try to get at the more feeling-oriented material.) Go in any order. Before Round III leave some silence.

During Rounds I and II, one person speaks at a time, into an appreciative silence. The only response to the speaker is non-verbal, although the leader may express thanks if that seems comfortable. There is a brief moment of silence between speakers so that we can let the sharing "sink in." Then the next person will share. This may seem awkward at first, but most groups find it very satisfying.

The one who is sharing has the job of speaking deeply from their heart about the topic at hand. Listeners have the task of keeping an open heart to what is shared.

The next speaker has the task of leaving some space before they speak. The leader is responsible for helping speakers remember the time frame they have to speak in. The speaking may go in any order. It is assumed that everyone in the group will speak, but if someone does not want to speak, they may pass.

Round III A more general discussion or ritual



## CREDO

“What happens when you cross a Jehovah’s Witness with a Unitarian?”  
“You get someone who knocks on doors but has nothing to say.”

This is an often-told joke about UU’s, but most of us feel that our denomination offers strong values and thought-provoking ideas. On the other hand, when asked what UU’s believe, it is easier for many of us to list all the things that UU’s do not believe than to articulate our beliefs. Although ours is a creedless denomination, as individuals we can examine our beliefs and write our own credo, or statement of belief. Our credos can address a myriad of questions about deep topics such as God, reality, life and death, truth, our purpose in this world, good and evil, miracles, and humankind.

Here are some quotations about beliefs that may expand your thinking about belief systems and creeds. As in all Covenant Group lessons, the quotations are provided to stimulate thought, not to provide answers.

*All men have need of the gods. —Homer*

How many things served us but yesterday as articles of faith, which today we deem but fables? —Michel Eyquem De Montaigne

*I feel no need for any other faith than my faith in human beings. Like Confucius of old, I am so absorbed in the wonder of earth and the life upon it that I cannot think of heaven and the angels. —Pearl S. Buck*

There’s something in every atheist, itching to believe, and something in every believer, itching to doubt. —Mignon McLaughlin

*To believe in something not yet proved and to underwrite it with our lives: it is the only way we can leave the future open. Man, surrounded by facts, permitting himself no surmise, no intuitive flash, no great hypothesis, no risk, is in a locked cell. Ignorance cannot seal the mind and imagination more surely. —Lillian Smith*

We are all tattooed in our cradles with the beliefs of our tribe; the record may seem superficial, but it is indelible. You cannot educate a man wholly out of the superstitious fears which were implanted in his imagination, no matter how utterly his reason may reject them. —Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

*We have all had the experience of finding our reactions and perhaps even our deeds have denied beliefs we thought were ours. —James Baldwin*

Religion is the human response to being alive and having to die. —F. Forrester Church

*Being religious means asking passionately the question of the meaning of our existence and being willing to receive answers, even if the answers hurt. —Paul Tillich*

In preparation for the first meeting of your covenant group, you will have a chance to explore what you believe. Your thoughts will not be set in stone, nor will you need to write a formal credo, but you will have a chance to articulate your convictions. Your personal credo may include some of the following concepts:

*beauty / truth / mystery / reason / science / creativity / knowledge / reality / purpose / mind / soul*  
*God/ Goddess / The Divine / Trinity / Sacred / humankind / nature / evolution*  
*faith / meditation / prayer /wheel of life / right & wrong /grace*  
*gratitude / compassion / forgiveness / peace / hope / love / good*  
*life / death / heaven / hell / reincarnation / karma / predestination / fate / providence*  
*Mohammed / Buddha / Jesus Christ / prophets / saviors*  
*evil / hatred / delusion / suffering / Satan / despair / repentance / sin / atonement / redemption*

Begin by making two lists.

- ✓ Head the first list, "I do not believe and never have believed that . . . " Then complete the list with whatever assertions come to mind
- ✓ Head the second list, "I used to believe that . . ." and record some beliefs you have let go of.

Study both lists. What topics are addressed in your statements of disbelief? Ponder these topics. What DO you believe about each?

- ✓ Now make a third list with beliefs you hold now, beginning each with the words, "I believe . . . . "

Look over your list. Are there other statements you would like to add to make a more complete statement of your beliefs?

### **Questions to Ponder**

Now that you have reflected on your beliefs, use these questions to focus your thoughts before speaking at the Covenant Group.

1. What are some statements that express your beliefs on the deep, important questions of life?
2. How have your beliefs changed over time? Do you think that the beliefs you have today will be the same ten years from now?
3. How difficult is it for you to speak of your beliefs
  - to yourself?
  - to like-minded people?
  - to people without strong beliefs?
  - to people who have strong opposing beliefs?How important it to speak of your beliefs to others?

## Leader's Notes for CREDO

### Beginning Activity: (5 min)

As participants enter, give each an index card and a pen to make a name tag with the following information:

Center: The name you wish to be called during meetings  
Upper Left: One religious value you cherish  
Upper Right: One religious value from your personal past which you have rejected  
Lower Left: The religion into which you were born  
Lower Right: A religious value with which you are now struggling and would like to explore

(If the word *religious* bothers some participants, have them change it to *ethical*.)

### Chalice Lighting: (2 min)

Ask someone to read the chalice lighting reading found in the bulletin

### Introductions: (5 min)

Ask group members to introduce themselves using the information written on their name tags.

### Silence: (3 min)

Introduce the time of silence with words such as, "*Let us enjoy a few minutes of silence as we let of the details of everyday life so that we may enter a more contemplative space.*"

Give your group the gift of three minutes of silence.

### Group Business: (10 min)

Tell them how glad you are they are in the group and how much you're looking forward to getting to know them.

- Each meeting will last an hour and a half to two hours and will be centered on a certain topic. The topic for the next meeting will be given out at the end of the meeting.
- Tell them where the bathroom is.
- Usually any business is handled at the end of the meeting – and is quite brief. Today it is early in the meeting and will be longer since we're just beginning.
- Look at covenant in the bulletin. Let's read it. Ask one person to read the first item. Ask the group: Any comments or problems? Can we all agree to this? Continue through all items of the Covenant.

### Shared Readings: (3 min)

Go around your group, letting each person in turn read from Shared Readings found in the bulletin until all readings are finished.

**Activity: (5 min)**

Have participants turn to the front of the bulletin to do the following task:

*Read over the words, circling those that are an important part of your beliefs and crossing out those that are at odds with them. Just ignore words that are irrelevant to you. Feel free to write other ideas that are important to you in the blank areas.*

**Introduce Deep Sharing/Deep Listening: (10 min)**

Tell the group about the process in your own words. They'll also be reading what's on the back of the bulletin. Tell them the deep sharing/deep listening is the core of the covenant group. It is a unique way of sharing and listening, so we'll spend a few minutes getting acquainted with this process. Then do your rounds of deep sharing/deep listening. Pay close attention to the time allotted each person to ensure all get to share at least once.

**Round I (5 min)**

Share three or four of the words you circled on the front of your bulletin.

**Round II (40 min)**

Using insights you gained from doing the homework, talk about your beliefs, how you came to these beliefs, and how you share your beliefs with others.

**Round III (15 min)**

In this session, did you discover anything new about what you believe? What has been especially meaningful to you?

**Closing Words: (1 min)**

Read the words in the bulletin.

**Song: (1 min)**

*Go Now in Peace*

**Group Business: (3 min)**

Give out homework for next time. Preview homework with the group by going over it. Tell them: Read over the homework, then respond to the questions you are drawn to. There is lots of material here, it is intended to give you fertile ground for thinking about this subject. You don't need to answer every question. You may want to respond to just one or two questions.

Ask if group members are ok with sharing the roster with one another.