

The Sources of Our Faith Humanism

Chalice Lighting

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Reading:

The living tradition we share draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teaching which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature

A Humanist Bond of Fellowship

Our bond of fellowship is the common purpose of producing a more abundant life for all humanity. To that end we avow faith in:

The orderliness of nature

The goodness of life,

The equality of every person,

The use of intelligence and the self-correcting method of science,

The power of persons of goodwill and sacrificial spirit to overcome difficulties in themselves and their world, and to establish progressively a democratic commonwealth of humankind.

Kenneth Patton

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Group Business

Closing Words and Song "Go Now in Peace"

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 and to come to the group one last time and say goodbye if I need to quit.
- 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

During this time, 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 or unsupportive at first, but most groups find it very satisfying once they get used to it.

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.

In a second “round” everyone who wishes to add second thoughts or thoughts sparked by what was shared may do so. It is not appropriate to ask questions about what someone else shared, only to reflect on what the sharing sparked in oneself. Once again, there should be a bit of silence between speakers.

If everyone has had a chance to speak a second time and there is time remaining, there may be a more conversational time. Those who are speaking should be aware of whether others wish to speak. Once again, the focus should be on what you are thinking and feeling, rather than probing others or attempting to solve problems for them.

Covenant Groups

Humanism



Leaders Guide Humanism

In this session, you will make use of all three rounds of the deep sharing model. Half of your sharing time should be spent on the first round and the other half divided between rounds two and three. So you'll want to mentally divide the time depending on the number in your group, and let your group know about how much time they have. (if you're a group of 6, for instance, and you have an hour of sharing time, you'd divide that hour first in half and then by six, giving each person no more than 5 minutes for their first sharing.)

As people are entering, recruit

1. Someone to read the reading on the last page of this leaders guide entitled: Second Reading.
2. Someone to light the chalice, and
3. Someone to read the following reading:

These are the words of Kenneth Patton, the liturgist of Humanism:

Let us worship, not in bowing down, not with closed eyes and stopped ears. Let us worship with the opening of all the windows of our beings, with the full outstretching of our spirits. Life comes with singing and laughter, with tears and confiding, with a rising wave too great to be held in the mind and heart and body, to those who have fallen in love with life. Let us worship, and let us learn to love.

(Light the chalice)

Check in and enjoy a few minutes of silence.

Remind your group that the first reading is from the UUA's bylaws. Read by going around the circle and letting each person in turn read the 6 sources. For the second reading, you have recruited a reader. The third reading (A Humanist Bond of Fellowship) found in the bulletin - should be done in unison. Leave some "sinking in" space between each reading.

Remark to your group that these three readings, and the two that were in their homework, were meant to give a general flavor of the belief system that is Humanism. This may really resonate with some people, and they might want to talk about that resonance and what they believe. The specific values which were drawn from Humanism in the UUA's statement of sources involve heeding science and reason and avoiding idolatry. The homework questions focused on these values.

Remind your group that the first go around is for each person to take about x minutes to reflect on some aspect of the topic, then there will be a round for second thoughts and reflections, then an informal discussion time.

Open the floor for sharing. When it comes time for the second round, invite second thoughts and observations. Remember....not everyone is expected to speak a second time, but there's still no cross talk. When everyone who wants to speak a second time has done so, say, "We have x minutes left for an informal discussion."

Do any business for the group.

Gather your group around the chalice and close with the following reading:

Ours has been yesterday, and ours will be today and tomorrow. Ours in the world, the universe, and life, if we will make it ours by the largeness and strength of our love. Ours is the commonwealth of humanity, now and tomorrow, building and yet to be built. – Kenneth Patton

Sing Go Now in Peace.

Second Reading:

The constructs of faith and belief that we call Humanism are ancient and have been called by several names. Socrates was executed for "atheism" and "corrupting youth" through teaching a version of Humanism. There is a Christian Humanism which is orthodox in belief but which concentrates, not on heaven but on earth, and not on praising God but on serving God's children. Christian Humanists look to Biblical passages like the one in which the risen Jesus told Peter, "If you love me, feed my sheep.", and their faith life is focused, as ours often is, on issues of peace and justice. This is a strong Humanistic expression of an orthodox faith. Contemporary author Kurt Vonnegut said the same thing in his characteristically off-beat way. "Take care of the people," he said, "and God almighty will take care of himself."

UU Humanists believe that religion is too important to be based on improvable beliefs such as belief in God. They wish to base the meaning of their lives on something that they can be sure of, that is here with us...that gives us meaning and purpose. For Humanists, their ultimate concern, the source of meaning and purpose, and the highest value of their lives is the human being, the fulfillment of human life, and the development of human potential.

Homework - Humanism

The sources of our tradition include Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the results of reason and science and warn against idolatries of mind and spirit.

O what a piece of work are we, how marvelously wrought
the quick contrivance of the hand, the wonder of our thought.

Why need to look for miracles out-side of Nature's law?
Humanity we wonder at with every breath we draw.

But give us room to move and grow, but give our spirit play,
and we can make a world of light out of the common clay.

Malvina Reynolds, (#313 in *Singing the Living Tradition*)

“The goal of Humanism is a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for the common good,”...”Humanists demand a shared life in a shared world...We assert that humanism will: (a) affirm life rather than deny it; (b) seek to elicit the possibilities of life, not flee from it; and, (c) endeavor to establish the conditions of a satisfactory life for all, not merely for a few.” *The Humanist Manifesto*

Questions for Reflection

1. Some images and constructs of science leave us awe struck because of their beauty, intricacy, organization, or size. Think of images like the earth hanging in space, the symmetrical beauty of DNA, or the body of knowledge we have amassed about the social structure of anthills. Think about your study of science and what you know about science. Do you remember being awestruck? What images of science partake of the Holy, for you?
2. Idolatry is making a God out of something that is not ultimate; giving it too much weight and power in our value system. In this culture, for instance, wealth is often idolized, and people find themselves focusing on acquiring wealth rather than being loving, keeping commitments, or even being moral. Have you struggled with idolatry in your life?
3. UU's bring reason into our religious life; while there is much that can never be proven or disproven (the existence of God for instance), UU's tend not to believe in things (that the earth is 5,000 years old, for instance) that are contrary to fact. Many UU's experienced their early religious life as having to choose between reason and faith. Reflect on how “heeding the results of reason and science” has caused your faith to grow.