

**The Sources of Our Faith
Judeo-Christian Teachings
Love your Neighbor**

Chalice Lighting

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Readings:

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 Litany for Atonement

For remaining silent when a single voice would have made a difference

We forgive ourselves and each other; we being again in love.

For each time that our fears have made us rigid and inaccessible

We forgive ourselves and each other; we being again in love.

For each time that we have struck out in anger without just cause

We forgive ourselves and each other; we being again in love.

For each time that our greed has blinded us to the needs of others

We forgive ourselves and each other; we being again in love.

For the selfishness which sets us apart and alone

We forgive ourselves and each other; we being again in love.

For falling short of the admonitions of the spirit

We forgive ourselves and each other; we being again in love.

For losing sight of our unity

We forgive ourselves and each other; we being 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 being again in love.

Robert Eller-Isaacs

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Group Business

Closing Words and Song "Go Now in Peace"

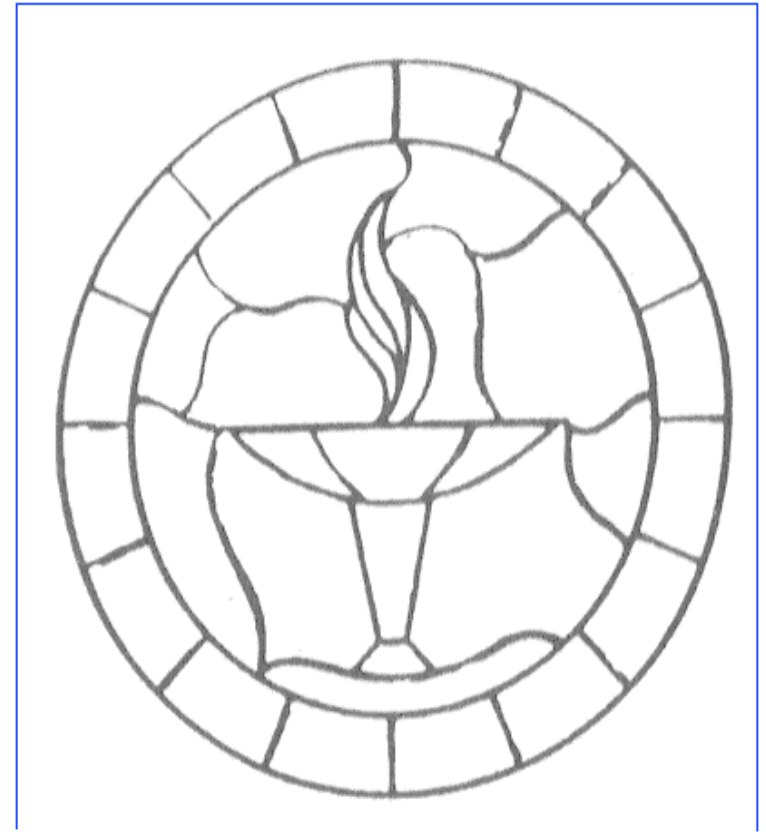
The Covenant

I 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.

Covenant Groups

Jewish-Christian Teachings Love Your Neighbor



Leader's Notes for Love Your Neighbor

Chalice Lighting: Light the chalice using words of your choosing.

Sharing of Joys and Concerns: Remind your group that the Sharing of Joys and Concerns is an opportunity for each person to EITHER contribute a one-word description of how they are feeling at the moment, OR to share something that presses on them, good or bad, which they want the group to know. If someone is absent, they will (hopefully) have called you and you can share the reason for their absence in the group.

Silence: Give your group the gift of three minutes of silence. Time it!

Shared Readings: Remind your group that 6 of the themes this year will come from this document they see as a reading, "The Sources of our Living Tradition". Go around your group, letting each person in turn read a sentence of the document. Continue around the circle to read the quotes that follow. For the Litany of Atonement ask people to read the first line, then have everyone respond with the sentence that is in italics.

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening: Do your rounds of deep sharing/deep listening. Ask for second thoughts as time allows. 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.

Discussion: if time

Group Business: Pass out homework for next time

Closing words: Invite people to hold hands around the chalice and say one or two words about an insight they have had this evening.

Sing: Go Now in Peace

Homework – Love Your Neighbor

The fourth of the sources in our Principles and Purposes reads, "Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves." Since the Unitarian Universalist church came into being due to a split from the traditional Christian church over the issues of the trinity and atonement, this source recognizes and affirms the historic Jewish and Christian roots of our tradition but emphasizes a particular portion of those traditions: basically the golden rule.

Matthew 22:39 You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Leviticus 19: 17-18 You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor... You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Luke 10:30-37 Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

John 21:15-17 Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, do you love me? He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." Jesus said to him a third time, "Simon, do you love me?" ...And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

Matthew 25:34-40 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Questions

1. What experience have you had with this source which asks you to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves. What does "loving your neighbor look like?
2. Where are you most at ease in "loving your neighbor"? What or who gives the most discomfort?
3. Who is your neighbor? ...in our church and church neighborhood? ...in the US? ...in the world?
4. How have you "fed my sheep?"
5. How have you fed the hungry, cared for the sick...the least of these brothers?