

UUCR Small Group Ministry Session Plan  
April: Surprise

*May your time together deepen your connections – mind, heart and spirit! -Rev. Rebekah*

CHALICE OR CANDLE LIGHTING

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPENING WORDS (by Rev. Lyn Cox)

*Come you accidental pilgrims, you who find yourself on a journey of surprise and wonder.  
Come you who emerge into this place as an act of liberation. Come you who seek a life of  
mindfulness and a place to test your thoughts. Come you who bring hearts of all kinds: heavy  
hearts, rusty hearts, hearts broken open in revelation, hearts full of love to share.  
We begin our story again, gathering courage, love, mindfulness, and a sense of purpose.  
We gather as people of all ages, of different abilities, different backgrounds,  
and different perspectives. We share a covenant, a direction for our shared journey,  
and a commitment to encourage and challenge one another to spiritual growth.  
This path will ask much from us. Let us move forward with love and appreciation for one  
another. Let us move forward knowing we are not alone.  
Whoever you are, whatever your gifts, you are welcome to join this journey.*

CHECK-IN

READINGS

“Wait long enough, and people will surprise and impress you.” ~Randy Pausch

“I try not to be surprised. Surprise is the public face of a mind that has been closed.” ~Bernard Beckett, Genesis

“The biggest threat to a better life is the desire to keep the future under control - to make the world predictable by reining in creativity and enterprise. Progress as a neat blueprint, with no deviations and no surprise, may work in children's cartoons or utopian novels. But it's just a fantasy.” ~Virginia Postrel

“Do the right thing. It will gratify some people and astonish the rest.” ~Mark Twain

“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality.” ~Albert Einstein

“Desperation can make a person do surprising things.” ~Veronica Roth, Allegiant

“The politics of surprise leads through the Gates of Astonishment into the Kingdom of Hope.”  
~Max Lerner

“How ridiculous and how strange to be surprised at anything which happens in life”  
~ Marcus Aurelius

“Surprise is the greatest gift which life can grant us.” ~Boris Pasternak

“There is no surprise more magical than the surprise of being loved:  
It is God's finger on man's shoulder.”  
~Charles Morgan

“Expect nothing. Live frugally on surprise.” ~Alice Walker

“When it's over, I want to say:  
all my life I was a bride married to amazement.  
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.”  
~Mary Oliver

#### MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

QUESTIONS and REQUESTS (Please respond to any of the questions and readings you feel moved by. It is not necessary to respond to all of them.)

- ❖ How have surprises influenced your life, relationships and choices/opportunities?
- ❖ When have you been pleasantly or unpleasantly surprised by the results of a choice?  
How did this impact your faith and understanding of the world?
- ❖ Of these readings, which one(s) spoke to where you are feeling today?
- ❖ What about the role of surprise in life speaks to your understanding as a Unitarian Universalist?
- ❖ What would you like our children and youth to know about surprises they will face?  
What would you have like to have heard as a child yourself?

SHARING (up to 6 to 8 minutes each without interruption, depending on the time available, with optional open discussion at the end after all have shared)

#### MOMENT OF SILENT GRATITUDE

LIKES (celebrations, gratitudes, appreciations for needs met) and WISHES (mournings, requests, acknowledgements of needs not met)

CHECK-OUT (a few words or phrases from each who wants to share)

#### CLOSING WORDS

*May we go forth from this place thankful for the life that sustains and renews us,  
and open to the grace that surrounds and surprises us.  
May we go forth from this place with openness and with thanksgiving.*

#### EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE OR CANDLE