

**Opening/
Chalice
Lighting:**

As we come together,
I go into myself.
I dig into myself for a deep answer.
I have patience with everything that remains
unsolved in my heart, and I live the question.
What is required of us is that we love the
difficult and learn to deal with it.
In the difficult are the friendly forces, the hands
that work on us.
It is clear that we must embrace the struggle.
Right in the difficult we must have our joys, our
happiness, our dreams.
We create this space to go into ourselves and
see how deep the place is from which our lives
flow. (RM Rilke, adapted by Scott Rudolf)

Check In:

Up to 2 minutes per person to share what they
bring with them since the last time the group
met

Reading:

You must learn one thing:
the world was made to be free in.
Give up all the other worlds
except the one to which you belong.
Sometimes it takes darkness and the sweet
confinement of your aloneness
to learn
anything or anyone
that does not bring you alive
is too small for you.
- David Whyte, *Sweet Darkness*

**Resting in
the
Silence:**

Take 2 minutes to just sit. If your group is up to
it, go longer, as long as you let people know
how long the silence will be.

**Questions
and
Quotes
From The
Common
Bowl:**

Share the quotes and questions for today's
session in the way that is customary in your
small group. You can pass the sheet, you can
select them randomly from a bowl after having
cut them into individual pieces. Or whatever
works well for your small group.

**Sharing/
Deep
Listening:**

Allow each person up to five minutes to share
what has come up for them about today's topic.
If someone does not use the full five minutes,
make sure you count to ten full breaths before
moving on to the next person, in case the
speaker is not truly finished.

**A Second
Share:**

If time allows, you may have a brief second
share from those who have found they have
more to say, keeping in mind your commitment
to going no longer than ninety minutes.

**Closing
Reading:**

"All good people agree,
And all good people say,
All nice people, like Us, are We
And every one else is They:
But if you cross over the sea,
Instead of over the way,
You may end by (think of it!) looking on We
As only a sort of They!"
- Rudyard Kipling, from *We and They*

**Extinguish
the
Chalice:**

Join hands and say the following together:
**May we live in a way that respects and
enhances the freedom of others.** And then,
extinguish your chalice until you meet again.

DEFINITION:

1. the act or process of freeing someone or something from another's control; the removal of traditional social rules, attitudes, etc.; a movement seeking equal rights and status for a group

SYNONYMS: setting free, salvation, emancipation, unchaining, release

Taking It Home:

Activity: In Order to Remain Engaged

The task of creating a society in which none are oppressed and all are liberated is demanding and often discouraging work. The author and activist Alice Walker knows this work well. She shares seven steps for how to remain a **Love Activist** without getting dragged down or burnt out: 1) Recommit Every Day 2) Protect What Matters Most 3) Embrace Your Joy 4) Stand for Truth 5) Be Courageous 6) Spread Forgiveness 7) Love the Earth

Your Assignment: Read through the list and choose the one that calls to you the most. What do you need to liberate from within you in order to remain engaged in the wider work of liberation? Once you have your answer, take some time this month to enact that step.

<http://blog.theshiftnetwork.com/blog/love-activism-alice-walker>

Books:

A Long Walk to Freedom by Nelson Mandela

Video:

Redemption Song by Bob Marley

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFGgbT_VasI

These materials are part of the small group ministry program at Jefferson Unitarian Church. For more information on using them, or to set up your small group, please contact Rev. Eric Banner.

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Jefferson Unitarian Church

March 2016 Small Group Session: Liberation 2.0

The Birmingham Children's Crusade of 1963

By Kim Gilmore

"As the campaign continued that month, SCLC leader James Bevel started to enact plans for a 'Children's Crusade' that he and other leaders believed might help turn the tide in Birmingham. Thousands of children were trained in the tactics of non-violence. On May 2nd, they left the 16th Street Baptist Church in groups, heading throughout the city to protest segregation peacefully. One of their goals was to talk to the mayor of Birmingham about segregation in their city. They were not met with a peaceful response. On the first day of the protest, hundreds of children were arrested. By the second day, Commissioner of Public Safety Bull O'Connor ordered police to spray the children with powerful water hoses, hit them with batons, and threaten them with police dogs.

"Despite this harsh treatment, children continued to volunteer to participate in the demonstrations over the next few days. Footage and photographs of the violent crackdown in Birmingham circulated throughout the nation and the world, causing an outcry. Businesses in downtown Birmingham were feeling the pressure. On May 5th, protestors marched to the city jail where many of the young people were still being held. They sang protest songs and continued their tactics of non-violent demonstration. Finally, local officials had agreed to meet with civil rights leaders and hash out a plan to end the protests. On May 10th, an agreement had been reached. City leaders agreed to desegregate business and to free all who had been jailed during the demonstrations. [...]

"The Children's Crusade marked a significant victory in Birmingham. The city was in the world spotlight, and local officials knew that they could no longer ignore the Civil Rights Movement."

<http://www.biography.com/news/black-history-birmingham-childrens-crusade-1963-video>

What songs or hymns inspire and motivate you?

"Liberation is at the heart of liberal religion. Things that have bound or shackled or limited human life have always drawn the attention of the liberal spirit. Whether it was ecclesiastical authority over science, the perceived divination of kings and queens, the power of master over slave, or the constraints of caste systems, the liberal spirit has been driven to open new pathways and level playing fields. Implicit in each of these efforts is the liberal's deeply held belief that human nature is good, not perfect, but good; and, if untethered, capable of caring for others and creating more good in the world." – Rev. Wendy Williams

Do you believe human nature is good?

"There are ways in which many of us here [in Unitarian Universalism] importantly have worked to liberate ourselves from "what I do not believe." However, as important as that is, we cannot dwell there and refuse to accept the positive freedom embedded in moving toward new, authentic, life-giving beliefs after discerning what we do believe and naming the values that we would have our religion, as an institution, help us maintain and advance." – Rev. Wendy Williams

Do you feel motivated to work for liberation? What inspires you?

"Freedom... involves more than freedom of choice. Many people entertain attitudes in favor of freedom, but socially effective freedom requires participation in associations that define or redefine freedom and that attempt to articulate or implement that freedom in a specific social milieu." – Rev. James Luther Adams, *On Being Human Religiously*

Where in your life have you felt "tied and inhibited from becoming or feeling free"?

"In what ways are we, [as people of privilege] implicated in the social structures of oppression? What are our various privileges in the current social structures, and how are they connected with, even dependent on, the suffering of others? How might our own practices unwittingly perpetuate the oppressive structures we are seeking to overturn? How can we use our privilege to effect change and alleviate suffering? What are we willing to give up?" - Paul Rasor, *Faith Without Certainty*

We must move beyond "liberal's 'decent concern'[...] In brief, it must be a liberalism ecstatic enough and disciplined enough to celebrate, demand, organize, institutionalize, suffer for, and exult over profound social and individual change." - Jack Mendelsohn, *Being Liberal in an Illiberal Age*

What risks are you willing to take for liberation? Your own? For others?

"It was during those long and lonely years that my hunger for the freedom of my own people became a hunger for the freedom of all people...the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. [...] For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. That is the true test of our devotion to freedom. With freedom comes responsibilities." - Nelson Mandela, *A Long Walk to Freedom*

For some people, the future is no longer as bright as the past. **Is this true for you?**