

Invitation (n.)

1. the act of inviting, such as an offer of entertainment or hospitality
2. the act of enticing or attracting; allurement
3. a formal request to be present or participate

synonyms: encouragement, provocation, temptation, lure, magnet, bait, enticement, attraction, allure; come-on

Taking It Home:

Activity: Invite a friend to church

Unitarian Universalists often struggle with the idea of sharing our faith, having too often been on the wrong end of proselytizing.

Your assignment: Remember that you too found this church once, and others will find it sooner with your invitation. Invite a friend to come to church with you.

Movie:

Grand Canyon- An invitation for two families to enter into each other's very different lives
(http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1037642-grand_canyon/)

Article:

Following an Ancient Call- Christine Paintner
(<http://abbeyofthearts.com/blog/2013/08/19/following-an-ancient-call-a-love-note-from-your-online-abbess/>)

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 September 2015 Small Group Session: Invitation 2.0

**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:

Do not try to save the whole world
or do anything grandiose.
Instead, create a clearing
in the dense forest of your life
and wait there patiently,
until the song that is your life falls
into your own cupped hands
and you recognize and greet it.
Only then will you know
how to give yourself to this world
so worthy of rescue.
-Clearing by Martha Postlewaite

**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:**

Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has
been sent as a guide from beyond. -- Rumi

**Extinguish
the
Chalice:**

Join hands and say the following together:
**As we have been invited into this circle, may
we invite an opening in our heart, now and in
the days ahead.**
And then, extinguish your chalice until you meet
again.

Following an Ancient Call

What if we could listen
like the great salmon
who goes about its ordinary life
when suddenly something shifts.

It does not come as a thunderous
revelation, but a quiet knowing
you have been preparing all
your life to trust.

The path lived until now no longer
satisfies but the path ahead
seems thousands of miles
long, and your womb is heavy.

There is no refusing this ancient call,
and to know ourselves as not alone,
but part of generations before us who,
like the salmon, share in this inheritance.

You now hear only the rush of energy
that comes with starting the long
return home and the pull in the
blood which cannot be ignored.

I like to imagine the salmon
swimming across the ocean
(as if that weren't daunting enough)
and after that endless voyage

it must face the mouth of the mighty river.

Does she hesitate, even for a moment?

*Does he want to turn back to less
turbulent waters?*

But there is something ripening in their
bellies.

Perhaps your list of pressing tasks is still
long.

Leave it there fluttering in the breeze,
uncrossed, undone, unfinished,
to do the only thing you can do

which is to swim,
to be carried by the waves and tide
and to know when to let the current carry
you
and when to fight it with all your strength,

and to know even this yes will
demand more than you were willing
to give: your life for the new birth,
what you think you know for

the ancient call home.

—Christine Valters Paintner

Is there enough silence, stillness and space in your life to hear “the invitation”?

If you are a dreamer, come in. If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar, A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer. If you're a pretender, come sit by my fire, For we have some flax golden tales to spin. Come in! Come in! - Invitation by Shel Silverstein

Are you open to the invitation of the divine? Many traditions talk about the divine as an “ache” or “lure” that invites us to transformation. Do you experience such a divine ache or lure in your life? Do you want to?

"Hospitality means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place." --Henri Nouwen

“Our weakness is an invitation to discover God's strength.” -- Carlos A. Rodriguez

Does your discomfort with traditional religious language prevent you from hearing an invitation into relationship? When others talk of “praying for you” or seeing you or others as “children of God” or joining together to do “God’s work,” do hear the invitation to connect or do the words sound like nails on a chalkboard? Do you accept their invitation or correct their language?

You don't have to attend every argument you're invited to. -- ANON

It is said that behind great anger is great pain. If so anger is an invitation to look at your deep sadness or feelings of lack of control. **What is anger trying to invite you to see and feel right now?**

This being human is a guest house. Every morning a new arrival. A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes. As an unexpected visitor. Welcome and entertain them all! -- Rumi

Are you living your “[calling](#)”? Most religions speak of God or Life –something beyond ourselves-inviting us to some unique mission or cause. If it is true that each of us has a unique calling, what's yours? Have you found it? Or are you too distracted to notice the invitation?

When you heard that voice and knew finally it called for you and what it was saying— where were you? Were you in the shower, wet and soapy, or chopping cabbage late for dinner? Were you planting radish seeds or seeking one lost sock? Maybe wiping handprints off a window or coaxing words into a sentence. -- Nancy Shaffer