

Resources for Leaders, January 2017

BOOKS

Welcome: A Unitarian Universalist Primer; edited by Patricia Frevert, Skinner House, 2009.

Singing the Living Tradition (grey hymnal) ... in the Readings section, consider:

- Opening words
- Chalice lightings
- Affirmations and Covenants
- Meditations
- Humanist Teachings
- Wisdom - World Religions

Meditations & Poetry

- The Seasoned Soul: Reflections on Growing Older by Eliza Blanchard, Skinner House, 2012
- Consider the Lilies: Meditations by Stephen Shick; Skinner House, 2004
- We Build Temples in the Heart: Side by Side We Gather (Meditations) by Patrick Murfin; Skinner House 2004
- Sonata for Voice and Silence by Mark Belletini; Skinner House, 2008 (exceptional!)
- House of Light by Mary Oliver; Beacon Press, 1990
- Risking Everything: 110 Poems of Love and Revelation by Roger Housden; Harmony, 2003
- The Blooming of a Lotus, by Thich Nhat Hanh; Beacon Press, revised edition 2009.

The Pocket Pema Chodron; edited by Eden Steinberg, Shambhala Publications, 2008. From the preface: “This collection brings together some of the most memorable, pithy and potent teachings of Pema Chodron, the beloved American Buddhist nun and best-selling author. These teachings offer us a bold vision of meeting each moment of our lives with greater wisdom, courage and compassion.”

The Book of Qualities, by J. Ruth Gendler; Harper Perennial, 1988. “...an insightful exploration of the rich diversity of human qualities. J. Ruth Gendler's evocative book has as its cast of familiar characters our own emotions, brought to life with a poet's wisdom and an artist's perceptive eye.”

Oneness: Great Principles Shared by All Religions; Jeffrey Moses, Ballantine Books, 1989 (revised edition 2002). “... the world's religions all seem to ask that their followers seek different paths to enlightenment. Yet beneath the seeming differences lies a pool of universal truth.

Oneness collects these beliefs together in one volume, in the actual words of each religion's scriptures.

Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most, by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton and Sheila Heen, Penguin Books 1999. "Difficult Conversations walks you through a proven step-by-step approach for how to have your toughest conversations with less stress and more success."

WEBSITES

<https://www.brainyquote.com/> This compilation of quotes can be browsed by author or topic.

<http://www.smallgroupministry.net/public/sessions/index.html> The UU Small Group Ministry Network. This website has many, many session plans from Small Group Ministry groups. This is a great place to look for quotes on a particular topic or theme.

<http://www.uua.org/worship> The UUA's WorshipWeb "provides meaningful, inspiring resources for Unitarian Universalist (UU) worship services and personal spiritual practice."

<http://www.uua.org/worship/braverwiser> Braver/Wiser. "Life is full of hard edges and complicated choices. Braver/Wiser gives you weekly message of courage and compassion for life as it is. Every Wednesday we deliver an original written reflection by a contemporary UU religious leader, and brief prayer, grounded in Unitarian Universalism." You can read it online or sign up for a weekly email.

<https://www.uua.org/leadership/skills> This UUA website is a treasure trove of resources for leaders! Here's the description: "Leadership skills are applied competencies that can be developed through a combination of study and practice. These can be learned through reading, workshops, classes, webinars, cross-congregational connections and 'on the job.' Below, you'll find links to resource pages of curated tips and tools as well as other useful materials." Topics include:

- Leading Change
- Communication Skills
- Conflict Resolution
- Finance and Stewardship
- Management Skills
- Growing Other Leaders

<https://www.uua.org/leadership/faith/spirit> Spiritually Grounded Leadership Development. This page has many resources related to spiritual development, including several short videos on "Lay Leadership as a Spiritual Practice".

<https://ucmvt.org/about/by-laws-and-governance/management-policies/> Lay leaders can access important management policies on this page of UCM's website. Take a look at these to familiarize yourself with the policies and procedures that are in place for a range of topics and issues.

General suggestions for choosing readings

Choose passages that are related to the topic of the meeting, or tie in to the monthly worship theme, or that speak to issues of concern (in the congregation, the community or the broader world) at that moment in time. And/or: choose passages that remind us of our spiritual journeys, being in community, finding inspiration/motivation, etc. Sometimes it's appropriate to tie the reading to the season, current events, or holidays. Other times the reading is better tied to some aspect of the work that is before the committee. Ask: what readings will help this gathering feel "spiritually grounded and compassionate"?

Consider choosing a reading or opening/closing words from whatever is at hand, for example, the children's covenant on the walls of the RE classrooms, or a quote from last Sunday's order of service. Sometimes spontaneously-chosen words can be meaningful and fitting, and you don't have to spend an hour looking for a passage that's "just right".

Lastly, use the members of your program or committee as a resource. Try delegating the responsibility for opening & closing readings, or making it a responsibility that rotates each month among committee members. Each person has their own favorite authors, books, websites, and other resources to draw from, and hearing what each person shares is a way of building relationship with each other.

Beginning and Ending Gatherings

- Start and end on time. This is one of the most important practices for building trust and respect in the group!
- Lighting a chalice helps folks settle down, get centered, and remember why we are here. Thoughtfully-chosen opening words can set the tone for the meeting and make it more focused, inclusive and productive.
- Similarly, extinguishing the chalice at the close of the meeting signals that the official business is done, and informal talk or social time may begin. It provides a sense of closure for the group and marks the transition to whatever comes next.

Components of meetings - sample format for agenda:

Welcoming words or moment of silence.

Chalice lighting with reading, poem, or song.

Review covenant and/or ground rules.

Check-in from each group member.

Choose note taker, time keeper.

Housekeeping. Quick, logistical items - nuts and bolts that involve little discussion.

Examples: approve last meeting's minutes, schedule future meetings & confirm location, brief review of tasks completed by email between meetings, etc.

Substance of meeting. This is where the main work gets done.

Review next steps/homework and confirm next meeting date.

Extinguish chalice, with closing reading or song.

Compiled by Emily Seifert and Peter Thoms, with additional input from Committee of Chairs.