

# Lenten Study 2019

## Exploring Faith



## Workshop #6

### Expressing our Faith

## Soulful Small Group Practices

(Adapted from Parker Palmer)

***Presume welcome and extend welcome.*** We all lead busy lives, which is why our time together is precious. Know that you are welcome, that you belong, and extend this welcome by your words and actions toward others in the group.

***Assume good intention.*** Each of us has come to this place because we care about our community, its past, its present and its future. Let us join with one another in that common intention.

***Come to this work with 100% of yourself.*** This means three things: to attend as faithfully as possible, to be as present as possible to the other members of the group, and to bring all of who you are – your joys and successes, your fears and failings.

***Speak for Self.*** A helpful practice is to use “I” statements. Share from your own unique story. No individual speaks for an entire group, or a whole profession. This is a space to set aside competition and to celebrate the different ways God works in each of our lives.

***Share the air.*** Pay attention to how much of the group time you take. Every voice is important and no single voice ought to dominate. Make sure everyone has spoken once on a topic before you speak a second time.

***Listen to Silence.*** Silence is rare gift in our busy world. Allow silence to be another member of the group.

***If the going gets rough, turn to wonder.*** If you find yourself feeling uncomfortable with the perspective shared by another, try not to allow judgment to set in. Instead, become intrigued. Ask for more information, and be open to the experience of others. Differences offer us an opportunity to learn from one another.

***Observe confidentiality.*** This is especially important in creating safety and building trust. Faith is a deeply personal topic, and we hold one another’s stories as sacred.

***No fixing.*** Offer advice or reflection when invited to do so, but otherwise avoid the temptation to fix, set-straight, or counsel another group member.

***Pray for one another in meetings and between meetings.*** Lift each other’s lives and stories to God in prayer as you leave your time together and through the week until you meet again. This is one of the greatest gifts we can give to one another.

***Believe that it is possible to emerge from our time refreshed, surprised and less burdened than when you came.*** Expect that our time together can provide for renewal, refreshment and helpful perspectives as we explore our faith together.

**Open with short prayer** *(you may use this prayer or your own)*

*You may also ask each person to contribute to the prayer by saying out loud in a word or simple phrase whatever they are thankful for, have concerns about or have hopes for.*

Loving God, in this time together, we ask that you help us to explore what it means to express our faith and to see our journeys with fresh eyes. Where there are easy answers, grant us questions. Where there are tired stories, grant us imagination. Where there is sinful certainty, grant us holy doubt. Help us listen for you and listen to one another, that we may expand our souls and deepen our understanding, and that we might find rest in you. Amen.

**Gathering**

*Gather again. Ask people to reintroduce themselves around the room and perhaps a question:*

*why they have come or what they hope for in this study.*

*Review the small-group practices -- first phrases only. Allow time for any comments or questions.*

**Reviewing our five-week study**

*For the past five weeks of Lent, we have been exploring aspects of our faith in worship, study groups and with take-home questions. We offer the questions on the following pages as a recap our five-week exploration and offer guidelines for how you may want to structure your own faith expression.*

*In today's workshop, we invite all members and friends of our community to try your hand at writing, drawing, painting or singing your own individual expression of your faith.*

*Remember: this is a snapshot of your faith at this time in your life.*

*For Easter Sunday, we want to share as many as possible in worship -- whether attributed or anonymous.*

Week 1: What does “faith” mean to you?

Week 2: Who and/or what is God to you?

Week 3: Who is Jesus to you?

Week 4: Who is the Holy Spirit to you?

Week 5:

What does the Church mean to you?

How does it help you in exploring and expressing your faith?

Week 5: How does your faith compel you to be in relationship with the rest of the world?

### **Station #1: Visual Expression**

*Activity: Make a visual image, illustrated word image (think illuminated manuscript...) or clay image*

Resources: Religious Art Books, Printout images, crayons and paints and poster Board, scissors and glue paste to cut out images, clay

### **Station #2 : Written Expression**

*Activity: write your own creed or faith expression, color code existing faith expressions to emphasize what is:*

- 1. true/believed,*
- 2. ideas you are leaning toward, or more receptive to than you were before this class,*
- 3. what is not true for you,*
- 4. add anything missing from traditional creeds that is important to your expression of faith.*

Resources: Printouts of various creeds of our denominations, faith expressions from Christian and other traditions,

### **Station #3: Music/Hymns – what music speaks to your faith**

*Activity: What is a hymn (or two or three) that expresses your faith at this point in your life, or did in the past.*

*Draw images or write some sentences that explain why the hymn tune, or music style or works bring clarity to your faith journey.*

Resources: Hymnals, lined and blank paper, paper with empty music staves, pens and markers

## **Recap**

*Allow 15-20 minutes at the end of today's workshop for individuals to share where they are headed with their faith expression.*

*Any participants if they are ready to share these as is or will commit to work further on them so they could be arrayed in church next Sunday.*

*SETUP will be Saturday. We will need final materials by Maundy Thursday.*

*Send to Deb Hall (debhall310@comcast.net) or office@upbrookline.org*

## **Close in Prayer** *(you may use this prayer or your own)*

Loving God, we have come together to explore our faith and to draw closer to you.

Bless us in our Lenten journeys, and help us find time for soulful moments in our week. Remind us of your presence, we pray, that we may sense your constant place in our lives. Turn our eyes and hearts toward the kind of world you imagine.

In gratitude, we say, Amen.