

Small Group Ministry
Group Session Plan
Ancestry of Faith

Note: “Ancestry” may refer to individual ancestors or to a collective or group. This session plan focuses on collective ancestry.

Opening “They Are With Us Still”, Kathleen McTigue (Singing the Living Tradition #721)

In the struggles we choose for ourselves, in the ways we move forward in our lives and bring our world forward with us,

It is right to remember the names of those who gave us strength in this choice of living. It is right to name the power of hard lives well-lived.

We share a history with those lives.

We belong to the same motion.

They too were strengthened by what had gone before.

They were drawn on by the vision of what might come to be.

Those who lived before us, who struggled for justice and suffered injustice before us, have not melted into the dust, and have not disappeared.

They are with us still.

The lives they lived hold us steady.

Their words remind us and call us back to ourselves. Their courage and love evoke our own.

We, the living, carry them with us: we are their voices, their hands; their hearts.

We take them with us, and *with* them choose the deeper path of living..

Check-in/Sharing

Topic:

What Does it Mean to Be A People of Ancestry? Soul Matters Packet, Carie Johnsen, Nov. 2015, Excerpt

People of ancestry look at their blessings and choose to see not only a *gift*, but also a *responsibility*. It’s one thing to gratefully celebrate the blessings passed on to us; it’s quite another to be so grateful for those blessings that we can’t help but ensure they get passed on to others. Simply put, ancestors pass on obligations. To be a people of ancestry means recognizing that something of value has been entrusted to you and that there is a long line of people behind you counting on you to pass it on. Even *expecting* this of you.

And whether that expectation feels to you like a blessing or a burden, it most surely also reminds you that you are part of something larger. Ancestors don’t simply tell you that you are obligated; they tell you that you are obligated *to something larger*. And not just that you are obligated to it, but that it is dependent *on you*. Whether the story continues to be told is up to you! Whether the family tradition continues to be done is up to you! Whether the native language continues to be taught to the children is up to you! Whether the family cycles of health are strengthened or the family cycles of dysfunction are stopped is up to you! Ancestors plop these incomplete and intimidating endeavors in our laps and say, “We’ve done our part and taken it as far as we can. The next step of the journey is in your hands.”

Reflections: Past, Present, Future

We experience ancestry in the present. But Past, Present, and Future are all interwoven. You are invited into three reflections: Past, Present, Future

The Past:

What expectations have you felt, or still feel from your ancestry?

What have you done with the expectations? What parts have you kept? What parts have you let go?

The Present:

We always have choices, and we constantly make choices. If you were raised in another faith tradition, what moved you to Unitarian Universalism?

If you were raised in the Unitarian Universalist tradition, what holds you here?

What difference has your faith ancestry – and the choices that you have made related to that ancestry--had in your life?

The Future:

We craft our own faith ancestry and pass it on. Indeed we are passing it on as we live.

What gifts and responsibilities are you leaving through the ancestry of which you are a part?

Check out/Likes and Wishes: How was the session for you?

Closing words: Suggestion: hold hands and close with “The Larger Circle”, Wendell Berry (#646) possibly as a unison reading.

We clasp the hands of those that go before us,
And the hands of those who come after us.
We enter the little circle of each other's arms
And the larger circle of lovers,
Whose hands are joined in a dance.
And the larger circle of all creatures,
Passing in and out of life, who move also in a dance.
To a music so subtle and vast that no ear hears it
Except in fragments.

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Prepared to accompany the Soul Matters packet created by Rev. Carie Johnsen, November 2015