Small Group Ministry

Group Session Plan

**Hospitality of Food**

This session can be preparation for events that involve eating, from special dinners, potluck gatherings, to donating food or preparing meals as a service event. And it can be used to consider the place of food in our community life.

**Opening Words**:

All religious teachings speak to the importance of treating the stranger with kindness and emphasize offering hospitality as a practical demonstration of spiritual principle. Even the story of Adam and Eve centered in offering and accepting to eat a fruit from the tree of knowledge. Although this story is widely considered to imply disobedience towards God, it nonetheless remains the first story of hospitality: Eve offered the apple to Adam, who accepted it and they both ate it together. Food symbolism in the sacred writings of the world religions abound, frequently drawing parallels between physical and spiritual food (Turner, 1996; Walbridge, 1996; Toomey, 1994). [Below is an example of Baha’i food symbolism invoking religious feeling and principle:]

John Walbridge (1996) writes that hospitality in the form of food for guests has been considered virtuous throughout history. He maintains that in the Middle East at the time of Muhammad, hospitality towards travelers mediated the lawlessness of the desert. In Christianity there is, in addition to the many parables of Christ that make mention of food, the famous image of the last supper and His statements about eating bread and drinking wine as if they were his blood and his flesh in memory of Him. It is part of many religious rites to share food or a meal or to eat special foods for certain occasions, as well as using blessed foods for physical and spiritual nourishment, cleansing, purification and healing.

Additionally throughout the history of religion, food has been sacrificed for spiritual reasons and abstention from food, in the form of fasting for spiritual purposes, exists in all religions in various forms. Food and religion are evidently intimately connected on a variety of levels.

**“Food, hospitality, religion and intercultural relations”** August 23, 2010 by [Marie Gervais](http://global-leadership.ca/pls/author/marie-gervais/)

[*http://global-leadership.ca/pls/food-hospitality-religion-and-intercultural-relations/*](http://global-leadership.ca/pls/food-hospitality-religion-and-intercultural-relations/)

**Check in/Sharing**: How is it with you today?

**Topic/Activity**

We frequently suggest that offering food will attract people to events, including meetings. But beyond the food itself is the contribution of food, an act of giving. There is also consideration of the needs and expectations of people participating. We engage with food intentionally “on a variety of levels” every time we decide to provide – or not to provide – food for a congregational or community event.

1. What role did food play in your life as you were growing up and in your family life?
2. What are the gifts and challenges of food in your life? How do these affect participating in communal eating?
3. Food is part of many of the events related to church life. Share some experiences with events where food is part of the event. What did that activity mean to you? If you worked with others, how did that feel? What did it mean to receive the food?
4. If this session is being used in preparation for an event, share the importance of the event being planned and the role of food in that event. What things need to be considered in planning food for a communal event? How do these considerations relate to our UU Principles?

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

**Closing Words**

Food, sustenance, primal needs

Companionship, connection. social needs

Food is a common, universal experience, the most primal form of comfort.

Alone we eat of necessity, together we eat of shared human experience.

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