

**A PROGRAMME FOR YOUNG ADULTS IN
UNITARIAN CHURCHES**

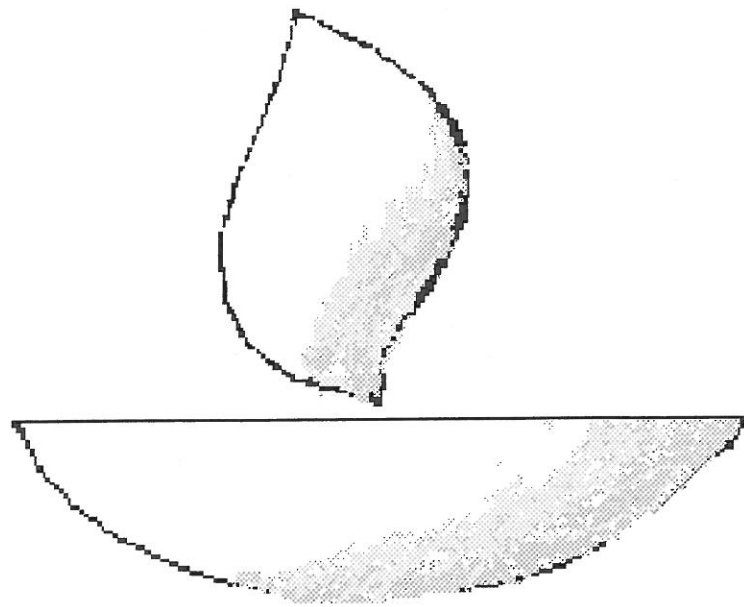
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Revised by Helen Royall

IGNITION

**Education and Training Commission
General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, 2005
Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex Street, London WC2R 3HY**

IGNITION



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From the Course Creator

IGNITION is a programme of nine sessions for adults in Unitarian church groups. The aim of the programme is to provide a framework in which people can have an enjoyable, rewarding experience and gain new insights into themselves, their church relationships and their beliefs.

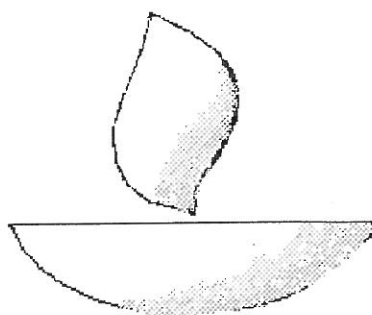
It is envisaged that a small group of between 6 and 12 people would take part though "any group is the right group". Sharing beliefs and experiences in a small group is an important part of Unitarian church life.

IGNITION is aimed at those church members who have had little or no previous experience of group-sharing activity, but leaders will be able to adapt the session for those who have.

The sessions are arranged in groups of three with the titles 'Getting Together'; 'Being a Unitarian' and 'W.H.Y.'. The programme can be used in any way; as a complete course, as three short courses, or as nine individual sessions – depending on the local situation.

Whilst 'Being a Unitarian' and 'W.H.Y.' (in particular) have specific content, the overall aim of IGNITION is to familiarise people with the **process** of small group sharing. Leaders should set an inclusive and non-critical atmosphere, encouraging the practice of listening to others and the confidence of individuals in talking about their own feelings and ideas.

This process is the one that is called for in most courses for religious growth and learning.



Notes for Course Leaders

Each session has a detailed, step by step sequence of activity, with suggestions for the leaders input. But to achieve the aims of the programme, those details should rest in the leader's comfortable and inclusive approach. The leader is there as a facilitator whose job is to encourage the others to develop their own participation rather than to accomplish his or her own interpretation of how the session should go. If the leader's attitude is genuinely comfortable and inclusive, everyone will respond.

Two concepts are crucial to the success of these sessions. They are **sharing** and **inclusiveness**.

SHARING

Discussion is a valuable activity for learning, but one of the words used frequently in the current generation of materials for the development of self-awareness and spiritual growth is "sharing".

Sharing is akin to discussion but means exploration of feelings as well as the exchange of ideas. The use of the word sharing has grown with the recognition that the understanding and mutual acceptance of emotions is crucial to personal spiritual growth.

The difference between discussion and sharing lies in the quality of listening employed. People who are sharing are not only taking in the content of what is being said; they are also listening and responding to the feelings of the person who is speaking. Their responses tell the speaker that that is so.

Sharing requires a degree of interpersonal trust and is most frequently achieved in groups of two, three or four people.

INCLUSIVENESS

Whatever the topic or theme for a discussion it must be dealt with in a way that involves the group. Every member must feel that they have been included – their opinions and feelings listened to and understood.

There is no guaranteed method of achieving this in terms of writing materials because the crucial factor is the attitude and approach of the leader. The leader must create a non-judgmental, trustful atmosphere so that the confidence of the individuals in the group to express themselves and their ideas is enhanced.

The leader should not use his or her position to coerce or to negate opinions. The leader is neither censor nor critic, should be neutral but not detached and should avoid putting members of the group on the defensive. The leader should respect all statements, even though they seem to be incorrect or irrelevant, and go on to foster fresh exploration.

Leaders should remember that disapproval kills discussion, whereas disagreement fosters it.

The leader's task is to summarize and to clarify the issues. If the leader asks a question it should usually be to get something defined or described more clearly for the group to understand.

When conflict or problems arise, either in an individual or in the group, the leader must decide how best to handle it. Differences of opinion or of attitudes within the group and personal difficulties for individuals are part and parcel of developing awareness and spiritual growth. Ideally the group itself should be encouraged to resolve difficult situations through sensitive understanding.

The most valuable asset of the leader is his/her knowledge and awareness of what is going on in the group and of the needs of the individual members, married to his/her own self-awareness.

PLANNING A SESSION

There is a basic strategy in planning a session which can enhance the chances of it being an 'inclusive' experience.

It is a strategy which can be applied, with a little imagination, to almost any topic or theme.

Instead of a talk about the subject, followed by a plenary discussion, the initiative is handed over to the participants:

- ❖ Invite **them** to think/write/draw individually about some aspect of the topic. The motivation can be a picture, a poem, a short quotation, a statement etc.
- ❖ Invite them to talk in pairs about what they have written
- ❖ In the whole group collate what they have shared on a flip chart or board
- ❖ Assist them to recognize common and important ideas from the list
- ❖ Invite further sharing in twos and threes about those important ideas
- ❖ Invite a sharing of thoughts in the whole group

This method – or variations of it – will cover the essential aspects of any topic, given a leader's emphatic and sensitive handling of the session. More importantly it will have the immeasurable advantage that the group will feel that they have been 'included' and that they own the exploration of the topic. Which they do.

PREPARING TO LEAD

Before planning or leading a session the leader should ask one question and give three reminders to her/himself.

The Question

Will the group enjoy this session?

Enjoyment is usually a combination of such things as:

- ❖ members of the group feeling that they have taken part significantly
- ❖ having some variety of activity – not spending too much time on one thing
- ❖ having the experience of sharing with others (not necessarily everyone) at a personal level
- ❖ having a laugh together
- ❖ achieving a sense of having learned about oneself or others

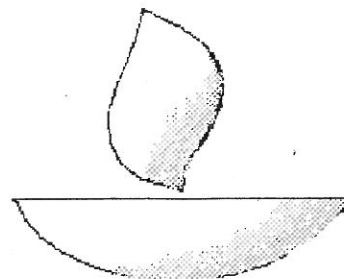
The Reminders

- ❖ my way of thinking or believing will not fit with everyone else
- ❖ my aim is to **empower others** to develop their own understanding and awareness
- ❖ the 'fail-safe' rule is "There is no way things can go wrong because whatever happens I can help the group learn from it."

One of the best ways of preparing to lead activities like those described in this program is to experience them as a participant. The leader then knows what it feels like to take part and will be more sensitive to responses when he or she is leading.

Getting Together

PERSONAL COAT OF ARMS



FORMAT

- ❖ Lighting of chalice, opening prayer or quiet time
- ❖ Names Round
- ❖ Leader's Introduction
- ❖ Desert Island



REFRESHMENT BREAK

- ❖ Human Knots
- ❖ Personal Coat of Arms
- ❖ Round

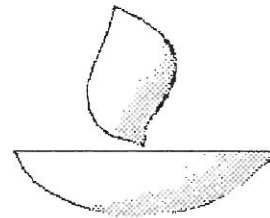
AIMS

- To enjoy the session
- To achieve greater awareness of the likes, dislikes and values of others
- To have individuals express what is important to them
- Sensitive listening

MATERIALS

- Paper, pens
 - Flip chart or poster sized sheet with felt pens (optional)
 - Identical shield shaped paper for each person
 - Slip of paper for each person (on which to write short motto)
 - Round card (see instructions on page 13)
 - Drinks for refreshment break
-

Lighting of Chalice and Opening Prayer or Quiet Time



Activities

Names Round

Invite participants to sit in a circle and introduce themselves by name **or** (if they already know each other) tell the group something about themselves which is not generally known / is amusing / is unusual.

Leader should go first to set a relaxed and humorous tone and to indicate a time-scale, which should be fairly short for each person.

Leader's Introduction

Thank you for coming along to the group.

What we are going to do is not deadly serious or difficult, but I think we will find it interesting and we may well learn something together. There are two main activities for us to explore, one before break and one after.

Desert Island

Sit in a circle with paper and pens

Leader draws imaginary, stereotyped desert island on flip chart (optional, but good for focusing attention and as lead for imagination. Also great fun if leader is no artist!)

Tell the group, "You are going to be marooned on a desert island for a long time. It is a magic island, however, and various things can be taken with you. No matter what you decide to take, on the island it will always work, or there will be a plentiful supply of it". Go through a list of items, one at a time, giving the group time to write down their choices.

Discourage interchange of ideas at this stage – they should keep their choices to themselves.

Example –

"You can take ...

Unlimited quantities of your favourite food (don't worry if it needs heating up – the island will see to that)

Unlimited quantities of your favourite drink

One book to read

One piece of music (the island kindly supplies equipment)

One utility item

One luxury item

One companion (other than a human being)

Usually 5 – 7 items are sufficient.

Taking one item at a time, go round the group finding out what each person has chosen.

Encourage questions and comments as the group learns about its members' likes and dislikes.

If appropriate to the group, find out how they would feel about being alone and explore the importance of solitude and companionship.

Refreshment Break



Human Knots

(Optional, but physical contact and task is usually enjoyable. Also brings back people's attention).

- Invite participants to stand in close circle and hold the hands of two different people in the circle – i.e. get all the arms crossed over each other.
- The group must now “untie” itself into a single circle without letting go of hands.

Personal Coat of Arms

Seated in a circle, give out shields, motto slips and pens.

- Invite participants to design their Coat of Arms, i.e. draw motifs of scenes on the shields which say something about their ideas and attitudes or are important aspects of their lives. The shield may be halved or quartered if more than one thing is to be drawn. Also invite them to write a motto for themselves on the slip of paper.
- Suggest that the group move apart and do not communicate whilst drawing
- Towards the end of the drawing time, leader moves around and collects the motto slips and shields and invites people back into the circle.
- Leader scatters the shields, face upwards, on the floor within the circle and invites participants to identify the Coats of Arms by the drawings and the motifs.
- As their shield is identified, the owner picks it up.
- Go round the group inviting each person to speak about their coat of arms – explaining it or enlarging upon it.

Leader should encourage questions or comments but make sure that they are not critical or derisory.

Round

Leader displays a card showing the beginnings of sentences (see below).

- Invite someone to respond, using one of the phrases to begin a sentence saying how they feel about the whole session they have just experienced.
- Leader must give the rule that no-one should comment about what is said – just listen and accept.
- Leader should also point out the ‘pass’ option.
- When first person has finished, leader invites the one next to the person to respond – and so on around the circle.
- If nobody volunteers, leader starts off – or invites a specific person to do so.

Participants will quickly get the pattern

Round Card

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| - I noticed ... | - I hope ... |
| - I appreciated ... | - I learned ... |
| - I wish ... | - I feel ... |
| - I discovered ... | - I pass |

Getting Together

LIFE CARDS

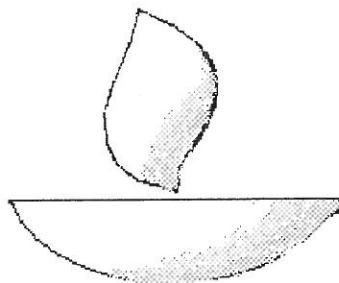
FORMAT

- ❖ Lighting of chalice, opening prayer or quiet time
- ❖ (Sherlock Holmes)
- ❖ Leader's Introduction
- ❖ Miming
- ❖ Favourite Places
- ❖ Sherlock Holmes



REFRESHMENT BREAK

- ❖ Life Cards
- ❖ Round



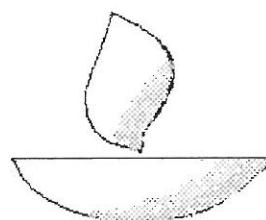
AIMS

- To enjoy the session
- To encourage greater self-awareness and group sensitivity
- To practice the skills of listening

MATERIALS

- Identical, large envelope for each person, distinguished only by small, pencilled number.
 - Set of mime cards (see page 16)
 - Map of British Isles and blu-tack
 - Set of life cards (see page 18)
 - Round card (see session one page 13)
 - Small stool
 - Drinks for refreshment break
-

Lighting of Chalice and Opening Prayer or Quiet Time



Activities

Sherlock Holmes

As each participant arrives give them an envelope and ask them to put into it some small object from their pocket or handbag, without letting anyone else see what it is. Ask them to remember the envelope number and return the envelope to you before the session begins.

Leader's Introduction

Seat everyone in a circle.

Thank you for coming along to the group.

We have a mixture of activities to share which we will find enjoyable and from which we will learn something about each other and about ourselves. If you feel that a particular activity is not for you, you don't have to take part and there will be no pressure for you to do so.

Miming

Make a gap in the circle and place the mime cards in a pile, face downwards, on a stool or chair in the gap.

Invite someone to take the top card and mime the action or object on the card. The group must identify the action or object.

Go round the circle a couple of times, taking turns to mime, using the gap in the circle as a 'stage'.

Mime Cards

Police officer	Book ends
Teacher	Light House
Weather Forecast	Music Stand
A sermon	Broken Window
A feather	Water
Golf Ball	An Orange

Favourite Places

Display the map of the British Isles where everyone can see it

Invite each person to indicate on the map a favourite place and describe what they did there and why it was significant or enjoyable for them.

Alternatively announce "you have unlimited money for one weeks holiday anywhere in the British Isles. Where would you go? Who with? What would you do?"

Leader should make sure that all participants have a turn and should encourage questions and comments that will help people talk about their experiences.

Sherlock Holmes

- Offer the envelopes round the circle, inviting people to take any one that is not their own.
- Say, "You are now Sherlock Holmes – you can read the character and history of a person from any small object which belongs to them. What does the object which you have in the envelope tell you about its owner?"
- Invite someone to read the character of their object's owner.
- If no-one volunteers, leader should start.
- After each character is 'read', the owner of that particular object must identify her/himself whilst what has been said is fresh in people's minds.
- Leader should make sure that the tone of the activity is fairly light-hearted, but should not miss the opportunity for development of points made if it is acceptable to those involved.

Refreshment Break ☕

Life Cards

This is one of the best games for exploring self-awareness and relationships.

- Seat participants in a circle.
- Place Life Cards, face downwards, on a stool in the centre of the circle. A low stool is important – so that there is no possible barrier to contact between participants.
- Invite someone to pick up the top card, read it aloud and give it to whoever they think is the most appropriate person in the group to receive it.
- The person receiving the card keeps it until the end of the game and picks up the next card – and so on.

The leader's role in the activity is very important.

- Leader observes the responses and behaviour of the person with the card, the receiver and the group.
- Discourages comments which try to indicate why a particular person has received a card and comments about who a card should be given to.
- Insist that the person who has picked up the card is the only one to decide who shall have it and that the only time a reason for giving a card to a particular person should be made known is when, and if, the person receiving it requests the reason from the person giving the card. This will happen only after **all** the cards have been given out.

- When all the cards have been given, ask each person to read out the cards they have received and develop a discussion using such questions as:
 - Who likes their cards?
 - Which card do you like best?
 - Who has a card they think should go to someone else? – Who?
 - Who would like to ask the person who gave them a particular card why they did so?
 - How did you feel when you did not get a card or did not get one for a long time?
 - What would happen if a different person had started the game?
 - Who found it hard to give a particular card? – Why?
 - How did you get round to having to make a difficult decision?
 - Who is surprised at the cards they received? – Why?

Notes:

The purpose of the activity is the interchange of feelings after the cards have been given out.

The leader's choice of cards is important. They should be arranged with the easy ones on top, and the more difficult ones at the bottom.

The success of the activity, in terms of learning, self-realisation and sensitivity, depends largely on the leader's knowledge of the group in choosing the cards and in leading the discussion empathetically.

There should be two or three times as many cards as there are people in the group.

Examples of Cards

Easy cards:

The person you know best
 The one with the bluest eyes
 The strongest person
 The noisiest person
 The tallest person
 The most easy-going person
 The one with the nicest smile
 The person you know least well
 The quietest person
 The one with the smartest clothes
 The one with the nicest hair
 The person you think would only have coffee for breakfast
 The person who looks most wide awake
 The person who looks as though they could most easily go to sleep
 The person who would make the best pantomime dame
 The person who would care best for a stray dog

More difficult cards:

The person who works hardest
The most sympathetic listener
The most determined person
The shyest person
The person who would take charge if the leader had to leave
The most confident person
The person who you would most likely confide in
Someone very different from yourself in personality
The person most like yourself in personality
A very sensitive person
The person of whose age you are least certain

Difficult cards:

The person who talks the most sense
The person you have changed your opinion about most
If you weren't yourself, who would you like to be in this group?
Someone who has not got a card
The person most likely to accept their limitations
The most mature person
The most unobtrusive person
The person with the most self-control
The most argumentative person
Someone you have learned something about during this session

Round

Invite comments about the session

(See first session 'Personal Coat of Arms', page 13, for details of Round Card)

Getting Together

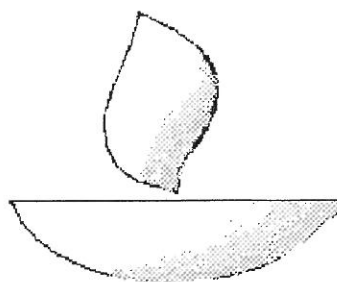
FANTASY JOURNEY

FORMAT

- ❖ Lighting of chalice, opening prayer or quiet time
- ❖ Pass The Object
- ❖ Leader's Introduction
- ❖ Last Week Cards
- ❖ Verbal Challenge



REFRESHMENT BREAK



- ❖ Feeling Hands
- ❖ Fantasy Journey
- ❖ Round

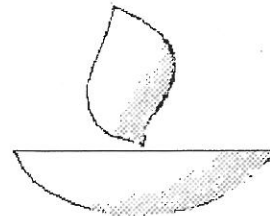
AIMS

- To enjoy the session
- To build group trust
- To experience shared relaxation and imagination

MATERIALS

- "Last Week" Cards (see text page 22)
 - One blindfold
 - Flip chart and felt pen
 - Round Card (see session one, page 13)
 - Drinks for refreshment break
-

Lighting of Chalice and Opening Prayer or Quiet Time



Activities

Pass the Object

- Seat participants in a circle.
- Leader holds an imaginary object (e.g. an egg beater) and mimes using it for its purpose.
- Passes the imaginary object to next person who 'uses' it, then 'erases' it by making rubbing motions with hands and substitutes a new imaginary object
- Continue around room

Leader's Introduction

Thank you for coming along to the group.

This session is mainly to do with relaxation and imagination.

First we have two contrasting activities, one quiet and one somewhat noisier, then after the break we are going on a fantasy journey together.

As with everything that we do there is no compulsion to be actively involved. If you prefer to just listen to what is going on, that's fine.

Last Week Cards

- Shuffle the Last Week Cards and give one to each person
- Invite someone to begin by sharing with the group something that happened recently ("Last Week" is a flexible time-scale) which fits what is on the card.
If no-one volunteers the leader should start
- Go round the group from the first volunteer.
- Leader should encourage gentle questioning and comments which will help people feel more confident about sharing their experience.

Last Week Cards

Something amusing that happened to me last week
Something that made me angry last week
The best moment for me last week
Something that made me sad last week
The most difficult thing that happened to me last week
Someone I met for the first time last week
The happiest moment of last week
Something that embarrassed me last week
Something that gave me satisfaction last week
Something that I needed last week
Something that I wanted last week

Refreshment Break

Feeling hands

- Seat participants in a circle.
- Invite people to move around and explore each other's hands. (Suggest they may have to identify each other in the dark!)
- Seated again, ask for a volunteer. Volunteer is blindfolded and remains seated with hands in lap, palms upwards.
- Group are invited to approach volunteer, one at a time, and place their hands in volunteer's hands. Volunteer must guess the identity of each person. There should be no responses as names are guessed so that a mistake becomes compound as others step forward.
- When all hands have been held, untie the blindfold and inform the volunteer where s/he was right or wrong
- Repeat with other volunteers.

A variation is to lead the volunteer round the backs of the seated group and place his or her hands on someone's head. Volunteer must guess who it is by exploring the head, but only as far as the ears.

Fantasy Journey

- Invite people to find their most comfortable position (ideally lying on the floor) and talk them through a process of relaxation. Suggest they close their eyes and then consciously relax feet, legs, trunk, shoulders, arms, neck, face and eyes – making one suggestion at a time, with a few moments in between.
- When everyone is fully relaxed invite them to come on an imaginary journey. No-one is to speak during the journey, but they are asked to remember the **first thing** that came to mind at certain moments during the journey.
- Leader tells story, allowing time for images to appear and be remembered.
- Leader must keep the whole thing quiet and low-key. If someone goes to sleep, that's fine!
- At the end of the story, leave some time before inviting people to open their eyes and wake up at their own speed. If they have moved away, invite them to return to the seated circle.
- Go round the circle asking each person to describe what images come to mind. Start from the beginning and take one item at a time, e.g. each person describe what their wood or forest was like before going round the circle again to find out what their paths were like.
- Leader encourages positive and sympathetic questioning to help people share their images.
- If leader considers it **appropriate for the group** the imaginative interpretation of the journey given after the story might be described and discussed.

Fantasy Journey - Story

(Where there is a ☆ the storyteller pauses for a few moments to allow images to be seen and remembered)

"Close your eyes and go down deep into yourself ... right down into the centre.

☆

Take three large, deep breaths.

☆

We are going on a journey together. I would like you to remember the first images that come to mind as we travel.

You are in a wood or forest. What is it like? What atmosphere has it got? What are the trees like?

☆

You are following a path through the wood. How would you describe the path?

☆

You meet a bear on the path. What kind is it? What is it doing?

☆

You need to move along the path. What happens to the bear? How did you deal with it?

☆

You notice a small object at the side of the path. It is something you have always wanted. You pick it up and carry it with you.

☆

The path comes to water. What is it like? How would you describe it?

☆

You can see that the path continues on the other side. How do you get over the water?

☆

The wood is beginning to thin out. You came to a wall across your path. What kind of wall is it? How high? Of what material?

☆

You need to cross the wall. How do you do it?

☆

This is where your journey ends

☆

And as you gently bring yourself back to the room we are in now ... notice your breathing ... and in your own time you may open your eyes."

A mature group might enjoy looking at the journey by means of the following imagery (after straightforward sharing of their journeys).

The forest represents how you see your life
The path is your journey through life
The bear represents life's problems
Dealing with the bear represents how you deal with life's problems
The object you picked up represents yourself
The water represents the people you live with
How you dealt with the water represents how you deal with your relationships
The wall represents death – how you see it
Getting over the wall represents how you deal with the idea of death
The other side of the wall represents how you feel about after-death

Round

Invite comments about the session

(See first session 'Personal Coat of Arms', page 13, for details of Round Card)

Being a Unitarian

UNITARIAN PRINCIPLES

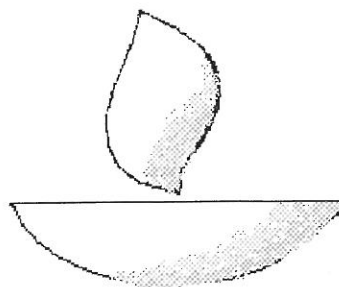
FORMAT

- ❖ Lighting of chalice, opening prayer or quiet time
- ❖ Object Story game
- ❖ Leader's Introduction
- ❖ Small Groups
- ❖ Plenary Groups



REFRESHMENT BREAK

- ❖ Mirrors
- ❖ Considering Role of Churches
- ❖ Unitarian Advertisement
- ❖ Closing



AIMS

To enjoy the session

To encourage participants to be involved in attempting to define a Unitarian approach to "beliefs" and "church"

MATERIALS

Postcard and felt pen for each person

Paper and pens for each person

Flip chart and felt pen

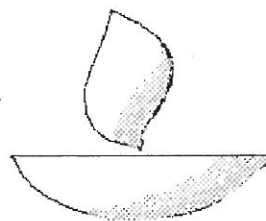
Wilbur statement on flip chart (see text page 28)

Martineau statement on flip chart (see text page 29)

Copies of Statement on Unitarian Churches (see Handout 1 page 30)

Drinks for refreshment break

Lighting of Chalice and Opening Prayer or Quiet Time



Activities

Object Story Game

(optional)

- Give one postcard to each person plus felt pen. Invite each person to think of an object – anything – and print what it is in large letters on the card. (Object can be, literally, anything – from a flea to a suspension bridge; from a nose to a sermon!).
- Instruct everyone to exchange their object card with someone else.
- All sit in a circle, holding the card they have so that all can see the object.
- Leader (or a volunteer) begins the story which includes the object she/he holds. When this has been achieved, the story teller calls someone else's name, who must continue the same story, working in the object which they hold. Keep going until all the objects have been used.

Leader's Introduction

Thank you for coming along to the group.

What we shall be doing is to look at two main areas of concern for a religious group and trying to work out how we, as Unitarians, feel about them. To put it another way, what position or principle do we adopt when we talk about them?

The two concerns are "beliefs" and "church".

The plan is to have a go at one before refreshments and the other afterwards – but we shall play it by ear!

I'd like to start by inviting you to respond or comment on this statement by E M Wilbur.
(Display on flip chart)

"Modern Unitarianism is now characterized not so much by its beliefs as by its insistence upon the fundamental principles of entire FREEDOM in belief, the full use of REASON in religion and generous TOLERANCE of differences of view".

Invite general comments, but try to keep them fairly brief at this stage – first reactions only.

Small Groups

- Divide into small groups of three or four. (You can make it interesting by dividing the line into birthdays, height, shoe size or whatever, then divide the line.)
- Invite small groups to concentrate on the idea of Freedom and list ways in which human freedom is limited.

(Whilst groups are talking, post Wilbur statement on wall).

Plenary Group

- Back in a circle, collate the results on the flip chart
- Draw from the suggestions on the flip chart that freedom means freedom from **arbitrary** constraints such as opinion or creed, rather than from physical constraints. Suggest human beings have only **finite freedom** (Tillich).

Also D H Lawrence – "Thank God I am not free, any more than a rooted tree is free" which has a different bearing on the matter.

Small Groups

- In small groups again, consider that if we have freedom of belief, what authority can we claim for what we believe to be true?

Plenary Group

- Back in a circle, collate the results on the flip chart
- Draw out **reason** and **conscience** as our authority.
- Display Martineau quotation
"Reason for the rational, conscience for the right – these are the sole organs for appreciating the last claims upon us, the courts of ultimate appeal, whose verdict is not only weakness but treason to resist."
- Invite comments and try to formulate, by consensus, a principle regarding freedom of belief.
- Post the principle on the wall.

Refreshment Break

Mirrors

- Divide the group into pairs – one **A**, one **B** – and face each other sitting or standing.
- **A** begins a movement, **B** must copy it or "mirror" it.
- When leader says "Change!" **A** mirrors **B**.

Considering Role of Churches

- Give out copies of the Statements on Unitarian churches (Handout 1 page 30)
- Invite each person to take a few minutes to read them through and decide which comes nearest to their idea and feelings about a Unitarian church.

Plenary Group

- Invite sharing of responses – collate on flip chart if appropriate
- Attempt a consensus principle from the responses
- Print it on flip chart.

Unitarian Advertisement

Invite each person, in silence, to compose a 12 word advertisement for a Unitarian church in a local newspaper.

No exchange of ideas

Closing

In a circle, invite each person to read their advertisement as a closing activity. No comments except a thank you for each contribution from the leader.

Handout 1

STATEMENTS ON UNITARIAN CHURCHES

A Unitarian church exists for the worship of God – of Ultimate Reality in whatever form it appears to individuals.	
The task of a Unitarian church is to enable people to grow spirituality.	
The purpose of a Unitarian Church is to encourage the exploration of relationships between its members, and between them and the powers and processes of the world.	
Unitarian worship should reflect its Christian heritage.	
A Unitarian church is the practical expression of tolerance in religious beliefs. Its main task should be to create situations in which sharing of beliefs and feelings in the quest for spiritual growth is made possible.	
A Unitarian church should cater for people of all religious backgrounds by holding worship that is unbiased to any particular tradition.	
Meeting the needs of its members should be the overriding criteria for Unitarian worship and activity.	
Fundamental to a Unitarian philosophy is the concept of a church as an educating community.	

Being a Unitarian

BELIEFS OF A UNITARIAN

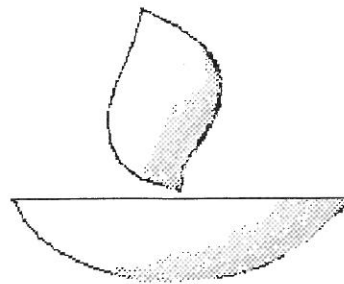
FORMAT

- ❖ Lighting of chalice, opening prayer or quiet time
- ❖ Leader's Introduction
- ❖ Forced Choices or Dimensions
- ❖ Trial Dimensions
- ❖ Belief Dimensions



REFRESHMENT BREAK

- ❖ Other Beliefs
- ❖ Closing Circle



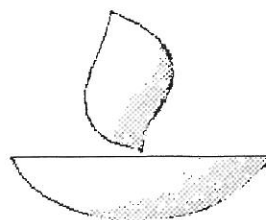
AIMS

- To enjoy the session
- To experience the reality of the wide range of beliefs held by Unitarians about the traditional themes of religion.
- To consider some Unitarian 'beliefs' that are not traditional

MATERIALS

- Prepared headings on flip chart (one page for each dimension or all dimensions on same page – see text, page 33, then decide).
 - Copies of the Ten Points (Handout 2 page 35) for each person (colour coded to facilitate formation of small groups, e.g. four with blue spot, four with red spot etc. according to number of small groups required)
 - Round Card (See first session, page 13, for details of Round Card)
 - Drinks for refreshment break
-

Lighting of Chalice and Opening Prayer or Quiet Time



Activities

Leader's Introduction

Thank you for coming to the group.
We are going to look at the wide range of beliefs held by Unitarians about the traditional themes of religion, and then to consider some suggested beliefs that are not traditional.

Forced Choices or Dimensions

- Invite everyone to stand and clear a space from one end of the room to another – along an imaginary line.
- Place a chair or small table half way along the 'line'.
- Announce that the line is a 'dimension' and that people are to be invited to take a position along the line according to where they feel they are, personally, on the dimension given.

Leader should emphasize that the phrases given are the extreme ends of the dimension and that nobody is allowed to rest comfortably in the middle (hence the chair!)

Trial Dimensions

- 1 Never watch TV Watch a great deal
2 Like only morning worship Like only evening worship
3 Prefer long sermons Prefer no sermon

Belief Dimensions

For the following dimensions, leader should have flip chart page(s) with appropriate headings ready.

Invite any comments when people are standing in their chosen place, but encourage listening to comments rather than listening to discussion.

- 4 Belief in God Atheist
5 Jesus was the son of God Jesus was only a Jewish Rabbi
6 The Bible is unique and inspired by God All scriptures are worth reading
7 Human nature is basically evil Human nature is basically good
and selfish and selfless
8 Immortality No after life

- Rearrange seating in a circle
- Point out the variation in beliefs and invite comments. Encourage discussion, perhaps by plotting people's choices on the dimensions, using the flip chart.
- Point out that we have been looking at the traditional themes of belief in the Christian world – God, Jesus, the Bible, human nature, life-after-death – whilst Unitarianism has a diversity of beliefs about these things (illustrated by the dimensions exercise) this does not mean a lack of commitment to some form of them by individual Unitarians.

Refreshment Break ☺



Other Beliefs

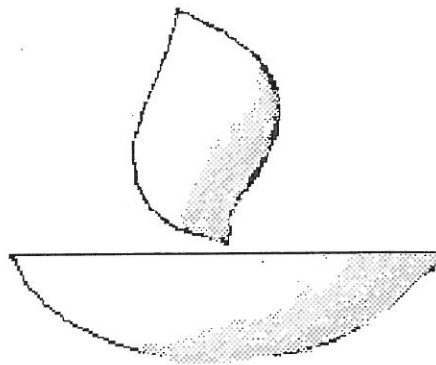
- Distribute the Ten Points sheets (Handout 2 page 35) and ask people to spend a few minutes reading them through, deciding which beliefs have most appeal for them personally.
No discussion whilst reading.
- Divide into small groups according to the colour code on the sheets and invite a sharing of responses to the Ten Points.
- Reform into plenary group
- Ask for any common responses to be reported.
- Invite discussion as to whether these Ten Points can be regarded as 'beliefs' in the ordinary sense. ("To believe" is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "To accept as true")

Closing Circle

Using the Ten Points either

- invite each person to read one aloud, going round the circle
- invite individual members, if they wish, to choose one to read **or**
- use the sheet as an antiphonal reading, with one person taking the opening statements in capitals.

Alternatively, if the group have not responded positively to the Ten Points, invite a sharing of comments about the session as a whole, using the Round Card. (See first session 'Personal Coat of Arms', page 13, for details of Round Card)



Handout 2

TEN POINTS

Quoted in **Our Beliefs** by David O Rankin

1 WE BELIEVE IN THE FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION

Every individual should be encouraged to develop their own personal theology, and to represent openly their religious opinions without fear of censure or reprisal.

2 WE BELIEVE IN TOLERATION OF RELIGIOUS IDEAS

All religions, in every age and culture, not only possess an intrinsic merit, but also a potential value for those who have learned the art of listening.

3 WE BELIEVE IN THE AUTHORITY OF REASON AND CONSCIENCE

The ultimate arbiter of religion is not a church, or a document, or an official, but the personal choice and decision of the individual.

4 WE BELIEVE IN THE NEVER-ENDING SEARCH FOR TRUTH

If the mind and heart are truly free and open, the revelations which appear to the human spirit are infinitely numerous, eternally fruitful and wondrously exciting.

5 WE BELIEVE IN THE UNITY OF EXPERIENCE

There is no fundamental conflict between faiths and knowledge, religion and the world, the sacred and the secular, since they all have their source in the same reality.

6 WE BELIEVE IN THE WORTH AND DIGNITY OF EACH HUMAN BEING

All people on earth have an equal claim to life, liberty and justice, and no idea, ideal or philosophy is superior to a single human life.

7 WE BELIEVE IN THE ETHICAL APPLICATION OF RELIGION

Good works are the natural product of a good faith, the evidence of an inner grace which finds completion in social and community involvement.

8 WE BELIEVE IN THE MOTIVE FORCE OF LOVE

The governing principle in human relationships is the principle of love, which always seeks the welfare of others and never seeks to hurt or destroy.

9 WE BELIEVE IN THE NECESSITY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

Records are open to scrutiny, elections are open to members, and ideas are open to criticism – so that people might govern themselves.

10 WE BELIEVE IN THE IMPORTANCE OF A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

The validation of experience requires the confirmation of peers, who provide a critical platform along with a network of mutual support.

Being a Unitarian

PERSONAL STANCES

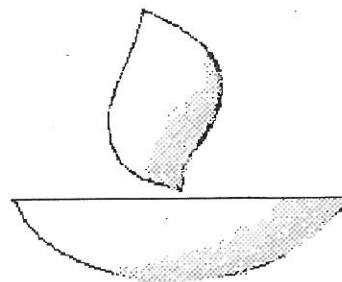
FORMAT

- ❖ Lighting of chalice, opening prayer or quiet time
- ❖ This is – I am
- ❖ Leader's Introduction
- ❖ Value Cards



REFRESHMENT BREAK

- ❖ Value Ranking
- ❖ Collation
- ❖ Closing Circle



AIMS

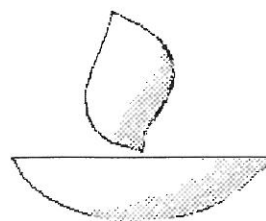
- To enjoy the session
- To consider and share what it is that each participant values
- To build trust

MATERIALS

- Plain postcards and pens for each person
 - Copy of values sheet for each person (Handout 3 page 40)
 - Flip chart and felt pen
 - Round Card (See first session, page 13, for details of Round Card)
 - Drinks for refreshment break
-

Lighting of Chalice and

Opening Prayer or Quiet Time



Activities

This is – I am

This introductory activity is a variation of the "I went to market" theme. Leader says "I am (name), and I have / feel / went / am (something unusual or not generally known and veering to the humorous, about him/herself. (Examples – I have a hole in my sock / went to yesterday.) The next person says, "This is (leader's name) and s/he has (whatever was said) and I am and I have / feel / went / am Each subsequent person in the group goes back to the beginning each time and adds their own name and fact. The last person has great fun!!

Leader's Introduction

We have two activities for this session. Both are to do with what we consider to be important things in life – what we most value as individuals and as Unitarians.

Value Cards

- Each member of the group takes a card.
- Invite people to write on it something s/he cares about deeply. It can be written at any length and in any style or form and no topic is forbidden. The member then signs the card and can also write on it whether they want their card read out to the group or not. The same applies to their name.
- Leader collects cards in and reads out those available to read. There should be no comments until all cards have been read.
- Now invite comments and discussion, repeating the card if necessary.

Refreshment Break

Value Ranking

- Divide into small groups of three or four people. (Have fun! Divide the group according to colour of eyes or hair etc.)
- Give out the Value Lists (Handout 3, page 40)
- Introduce the two lists, making sure that everyone understands the difference between 'Terminal' and 'Instrumental' values e.g. Terminal – what we would like to achieve. Instrumental – personal attributes.
- Invite people to spend a few minutes putting the lists into rank order according to the instructions on the sheet. Do this silently.

Collation

With the full group collate the ranking results on the flip chart. What is needed is to try to identify which half a dozen values have been placed highly by the group as a whole – for each list.

The simplest way is probably to just go round the group asking each person for their top four values and write them down on the flip chart.

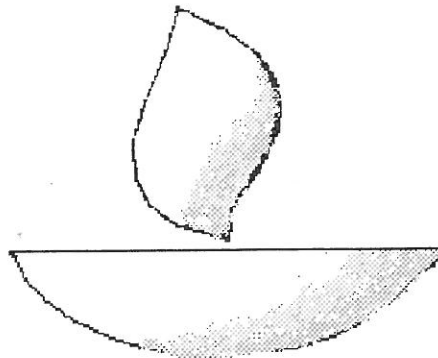
Introduce general discussion by telling the group that American research discovered that Unitarians rated certain values higher than other religious or non-religious groups.

Viz: Unitarian Terminal Values: Self respect; wisdom; inner harmony; mature love; a world of beauty; an exciting life.

Unitarian Instrumental Values: loving; independent; intellectual; imaginative; logical. Compare with the present group's choices.

Closing Circle

- In circle
- Ask people to collect their thoughts and decide on one value that they would like to claim for themselves. Sit quietly whilst people decide.
- Invite each person to say what their value is, but make it clear that there is a pass option.



Handout 3

VALUES

Here are two sets of values, listed in alphabetical order. Arrange each list in order of their importance to you as guiding principles in your life. In each list place a 1 beside the value most important to you, a 2 by the second and so on down to 18 for the least important. Please do this without talking to anyone.

TERMINAL VALUES

INSTRUMENTAL VALUES

A comfortable life (a prosperous life)		Ambitious (hardworking, aspiring)	
An exciting life (a stimulating life)		Broadminded (open-minded)	
A sense of accomplishment (lasting contribution)		Capable (competent, effective)	
A world at peace (free of war and conflict)		Cheerful (light-hearted, joyful)	
A world of beauty (beauty of nature and the arts)		Clean (neat, tidy)	
Equality (equal opportunity)		Courageous (standing up for your beliefs)	
Family security (taking care of loved ones)		Forgiving (willing to pardon others)	
Freedom (independence, free choice)		Helpful (Working for others' welfare)	
Happiness (contentedness)		Honest (sincere, truthful)	
Inner harmony (freedom from inner conflict)		Imaginative (daring, creative)	
Mature love (sexual and spiritual intimacy)		Independent (self-reliant and self-sufficient)	
National Security (protection from attack)		Intellectual (intelligent, reflective)	
Pleasure (an enjoyable, leisurely life)		Logical (consistent, rational)	
Salvation (saved, eternal life)		Obedient (dutiful, respectful)	
Self-respect (self-esteem)		Polite (courteous, well-mannered)	
Social recognition (respect, admiration)		Responsible (dependable, reliable)	
True friendship (close companionship)		Loving (affectionate, tender)	
Wisdom (mature understanding of life)		Self-controlled (restrained, self-disciplined)	

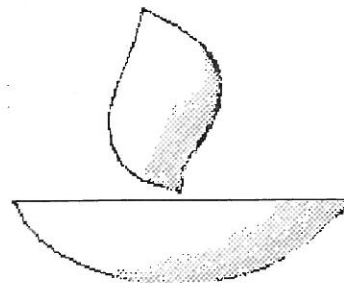
WHERE I AM

FORMAT

- ❖ Lighting of chalice, opening prayer or quiet time
- ❖ Alphabet Order
- ❖ Leader's Introduction
- ❖ Uniqueness Cards
- ❖ Religious Stories
- ❖ Time Capsule
- ❖ Closing or ...



REFRESHMENTS



AIMS

To enjoy the session

For each member of the group to share their religious journey, to explore their own uniqueness and to consider what stage they have arrived at in life.

MATERIALS

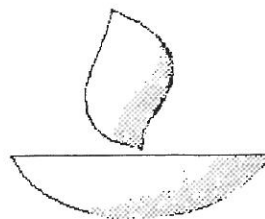
Two postcards and a pen for each person

Clipboards and paper for each person

Drinks for refreshment break

Lighting of Chalice and

Opening Prayer or Quiet Time



Activities

Alphabet Order

- Introductory activity
- In a circle, everyone gives their first and last names
- Ask the group to re-arrange themselves alphabetically according to the first letter of their first names
- When they have settled, invite re-arrangement by surnames.
(Leader does all this with a smile – and perhaps a hint that the process has something to do with the session's activity – which is entirely false. The idea is to have people enjoy mixing themselves together)
- When finally settled, ask people to say what nick-names they have, or have had in the past.

Leader's Introduction

Thank you for coming to the group.

We are going to do three activities together, leaving the refreshments to the end of the session – so make yourselves comfortable! The activities are all about ourselves and where we have arrived at in our journey through life.

Uniqueness Cards

- Give out a postcard and a pen to each person
- Invite each one to write a description of themselves in such a way that it could be no other person in the group. Point out that it is better to describe ideas and personality than physical appearance.
- Each person reads their own description out to the group. There will probably be many descriptions that are not particularly unique. Have people revise them and find out how they really are unique. The goal is that no-one could say, "That's just like me!"

Religious Stories

- Ask people to draw a time line across the paper
- Mark the point of birth and an estimated point of death (some may not wish to do this) and the point where you are now
- Along the time line invite people to identify significant periods or experiences in their religious journey through life. (Leader must give sufficient time for everyone to finish)
- Invite each person to share their religious story with the group. Reticence is allowed – there may be parts of the story which people do not feel safe to share. Leader should encourage, by example, sensitive comments and questions and should discourage spurious or critical remarks

Being listened to is as important as talking

Time Capsule

- Give out another postcard and tell the group more paper is available if required
- Leader says, "You have just chosen to put material into a time capsule which will be sealed up for two thousand years. What you put in must give someone in the distant future a clear idea of what you are like as an individual person now. One item which will go in is a photograph of yourself. You must choose what you are going to wear in the photo and what you will be doing. You may put a book or some other object which will help build a picture of yourself. You may also write or draw for the same purpose. The observer in the future wants to know something of your ideas and how you feel about life at whatever stage you are now at."
- Leader must give sufficient time for everyone to finish.

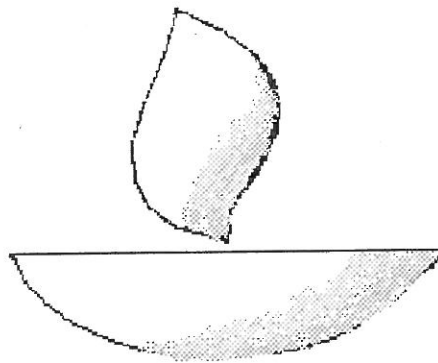
Closing or Refreshments



Whichever the leader thinks will be the most appropriate way round. Having a break and then closing with a reminder of the session's activities might be a good thing, but the refreshments might break the group up too much for getting together again. In which case do the closing first.

Closing

- In a circle, invite people to select **one** item from their time capsule to share with the group
- Go round the circle. No comments or responses except "Thank you" from the leader.



HOW WE MOVE ON

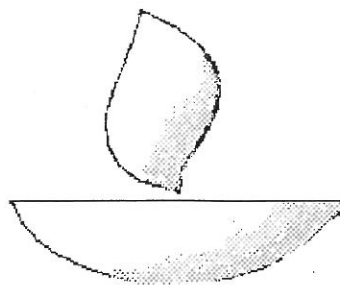
FORMAT

- ❖ Lighting of chalice, opening prayer or quiet time
- ❖ Shake Hands
- ❖ Leader's Introduction
- ❖ Time Machine Fantasy



REFRESHMENTS

- ❖ Pandora's House
- ❖ Closing



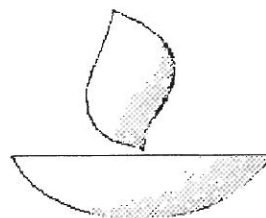
AIMS

- To enjoy the session
- To take part in significant sharing activity
- To be conscious of the role of the church community in personal growth

MATERIALS

- Photocopies of Pandora's House for each person (colour coded to facilitate dividing into small groups of three or four i.e. four copies with blue spots, four with red etc.)
 - Flip chart version of Pandora's House (see text pages 49 and 50)
 - Felt pen
 - Pens and pencils
 - Postcard for each person
 - Drinks for refreshment break
-

Lighting of Chalice and Opening Prayer or Quiet Time



Activities

Shake Hands

- Introductory activity (also physical activity to contrast with the Time Machine fantasy)
 - Invite people to move around, shaking hands with the others – using their right hands – until told to stop
 - When stopped, leader says, "Link arms back to back with the person shaking your hand (or the last one to do so) and tell each other something interesting that has happened since you last met".
- (Odd person out partnered by leader)

- Shake hands again, this time with the left hand.
- When stopped leader says, "Keep shaking your partner's hand and whilst you are doing so, give each other a compliment!"

Leader's Introduction

Thank you for coming to the group.

What we are going to do during this session is two activities in which we will be using our imagination and drawing on our life's experiences to share with each other.

The aim of a group like this is to give us the opportunity to share our thoughts and feelings in a different and significant way. It is in doing so that we come to fresh understanding of each other and ourselves.

This is the way we move on in our religious and personal awareness.

So as we take part in the activities let us try to be conscious of what we are doing in that way.

We have come together to learn and to grow through our sharing.

Time Machine Fantasy

- Invite people to find their most comfortable position (ideally lying on the floor) and talk them through a process of relaxation.
- Suggest they close their eyes and then consciously relax feet, legs, trunk, shoulders, arms, neck, face and eyes – making one suggestion at a time with a few moments in between.
- When everyone is relaxed, leader conducts the fantasy.

(Where there is a ★ the leader pauses for a few moments to allow images to be seen and remembered)

"You are going on a journey which has been dreamed about by writers throughout the ages. Try to remember everything about it that you can.

You have a time machine in which you can visit the past present or future.

★

Think about where you would go

Decide on a time and place in the past or the future – just one time and place.

★

When you are ready let your mind move to that time and place.

★

Get out of the machine and look around.

Where are you?

★

Notice all the details – the landscape, the buildings.



Are there any people around? What are they like?
How many? How old?
What are they doing? What are they wearing?



Notice yourself and what you are wearing.



Who are the other people you are with?



How does it feel?



Picture that time and place as vividly as you can and see yourself experiencing life in that time.



When you are ready to go back to your time machine, climb in and return to the present.



And as you gently bring yourself back to the room we are in now ... notice your breathing ... and in your own time you may open your eyes."

Refreshment Break »



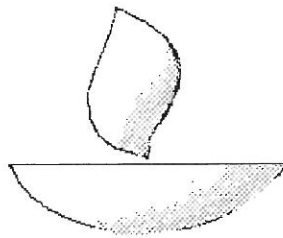
Pandora's House

- In circle, give out the Pandora's House sheets (Handout 4 page 50), pens and pencils.
- Display the flip chart version
- Explain what is wanted in the windows of the house (drawings or symbols representing life experiences which come under the headings given (see box below) – write the headings on the flip chart)
- The motto should say something of their own personality and/or approach to life
- Invite people to spend a few minutes individually working at their house.
- When people have finished, invite them to form small groups according to the colour on the sheets and share their house with the other members of their group.

A great success	A life-long interest
A great hope	A great failure
A motto	

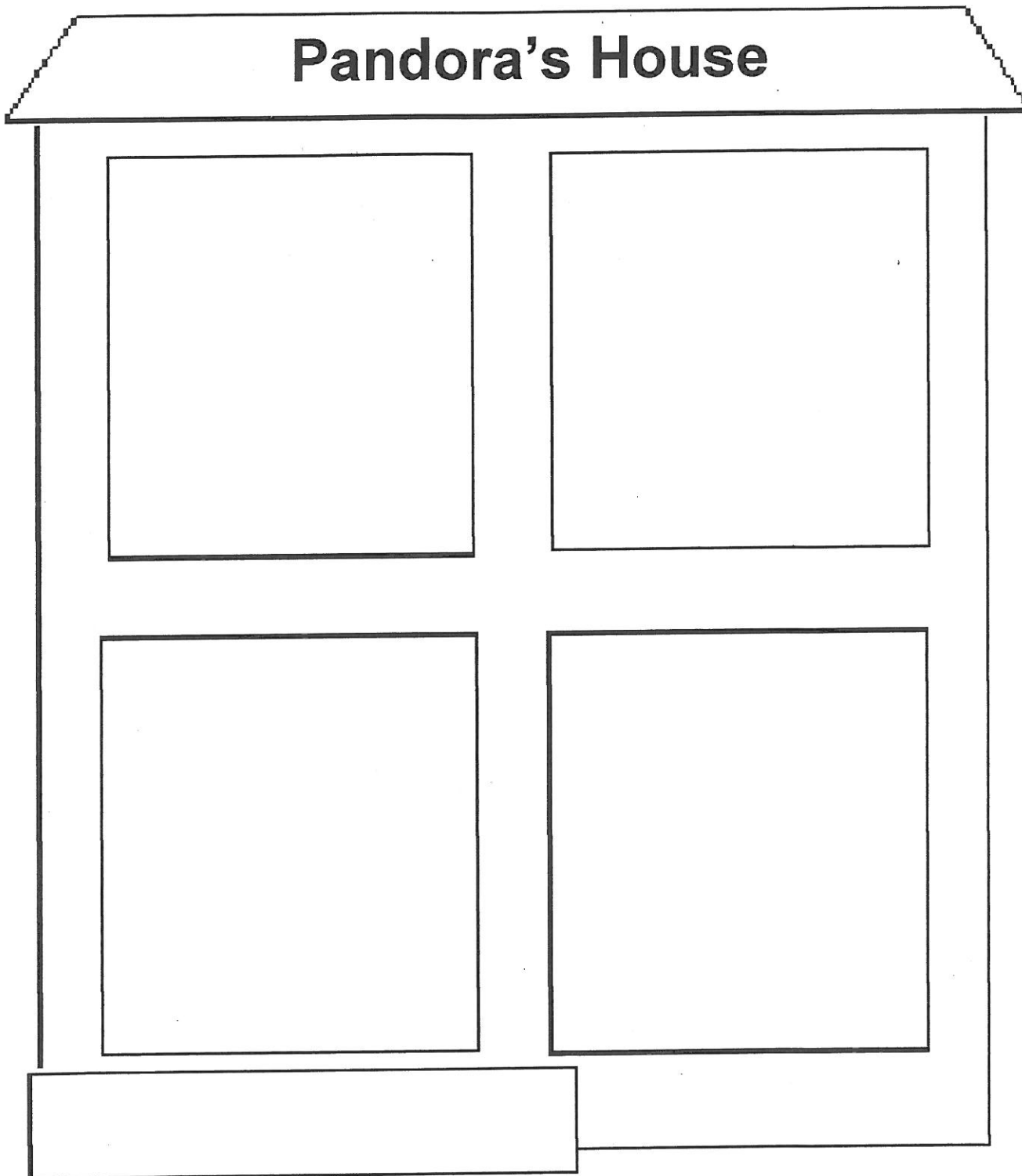
Closing

- In a circle, give a postcard to each person and ask them to write on it one way in which the church has helped them in their life's journey. Ask people **not** to put their names on the cards.
- Leader collects the cards and, without comment from him/her or from the group, reads them out one by one.



Handout 4

Pandora's House



W.H.Y.

YOU, ME AND US

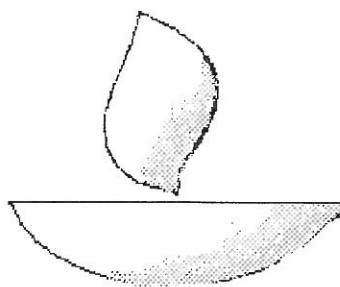
FORMAT

- ❖ Lighting of chalice, opening prayer or quiet time
- ❖ Badges
- ❖ Leader's Introduction
- ❖ Life Over Five



REFRESHMENTS

- ❖ Listening Triads
- ❖ Positive Statements



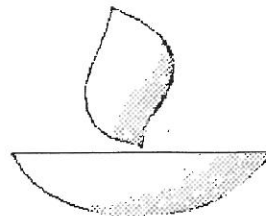
AIMS

- To enjoy the session
- To experience positive sharing
- To experience consciously sensitive listening and responding

MATERIALS

- Materials for making badges: thin card, felt pens, sellotape, safety pins, scissors etc.
 - Post-card sized pieces of paper – enough for each person to have one for every other member of the group e.g. if there are 10 in the group each person requires 9 pieces of paper = 90
 - Flip chart and felt pen
 - Pens and pencils
 - Drinks for refreshment break
-

Lighting of Chalice and Opening Prayer or Quiet Time



Activities

Badges

- Invite each person to make a name badge, decorated in any way they like: **either** for themselves (if the group don't know each other very well) displaying something about themselves, **or** for someone else in the group (partner people off) if they know each other well.
- Invite everyone to wear their badges during the session

Leader's Introduction

Thank you for coming to the group.

One of the most important requirements for the significant sharing of ideas and feelings is the ability to listen sensitively to what someone else is saying.

We are going to try a couple of listening activities in order to focus our attention on this essential skill.

Life Over Five

- In circle invite people to divide the number of their years by five (Extra years just making the final group of years longer i.e. everyone has five groups of years).
- Invite eyes closed and think about your life in general.
- Now think about your life in the first section of years and share one memory of it with the group. (Go round in a circle).
- Continue with the other sections.
- When all the sections are done invite people to make two wishes, one out loud and one silently.

Refreshment Break ☺

Listening Triads

Involvement in sensitive listening

- In a circle.
- Divide the circle in threes simply by counting round.
- Brainstorm on the flip chart all the topics about which people in general tend to expend emotional energy (e.g. politics, the greenhouse effect, marriage, religion, bereavement, inflation etc.).
- Invite each person in the group to think of something they are concerned about **with a view to speaking for a minute on that topic**. (Leader should encourage people not to be anecdotal and to concentrate on what they think and feel about the subject).
- Leader describes what groups of three are being asked to do:
 - Designate people **A, B** and **C**
 - **A** speaks for one minute on chosen topic
 - **B** and **C** listen without comment
 - **B** gives back to **A**, **as exactly as possible**, what **A** has been saying.
 - **A** responds and corrects any variations of meaning or emphasis coming from **B**.
 - **C** observes and comments **positively** if asked.
 - Change round: **B** speaks, **C** gives back, **A** observes.
 - Then **C** speaks, **A** gives back, **B** observes.

- If leader feels it would be useful s/he invites two others to help with a demonstration of listening triads, with her/him as the listener (**B**) who 'gives back'. (This is the crucial and more difficult task. The demonstration could be arranged before the session begins if leader feels this would be more successful).
- **Ideally, Listening Triads are about recognition and response to feelings and opinions; it is not a test of factual memory.**
- Invite triads to attempt the experience.

Closing Positive Statements

- When listening exercise is finished, invite all to move so that they are sitting next to different people.
- Give out enough papers for each person to have one for each of the other members of the group.
- Everyone writes a positive comment about each other person, using individual papers and putting each person's name on the back of their paper.
- When all are finished ask group to put their comments, names upward, on the floor within the circle, or on a table.
- Everyone collects their named pile and reads the comments for themselves.

