

**First Parish Church of Groton, Small Group Ministry**  
**Spring 2012 Session No. 6: Celebration \***

Facilitator \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\* With help from Michelle Collins, Towson UU Church, Lutherville, MD and River of Grass UU Congregation, Davie, FL

**Supplies needed:** Chalice, matches, drawing/writing paper, art supplies, questions for the topic to hand out *and* a copy of Byrd Baylor's I'm in Charge of Celebrations

**1. Chalice Lighting/Opening Words:** 1 min.

As the colors of the rainbow play inside the flame, as the flame plays with the molecules in the air, as the air plays against the fibers of our skin, may the lighting of our chalice remind us to celebrate this day.

— Rev. Maj-Brit Johnson

**2. Check-in/Sharing:** up to 30 mins.

Each person takes a few minutes to check in. Invite people to check in by answering: *How is it with your spirit?* or to share a spiritual moment from the past week.

**3. Topic:** total time 60 mins.

**A. Introduction to the topic: *Celebration*:** 10 minutes

*Celebrate:*

- to observe a day or commemorate an event with ceremonies or festivities
- to make known publicly; to proclaim
- to praise widely or to present to widespread and favorable public notice
- to perform with appropriate rites and ceremonies

“How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.”

— Annie Dillard

“I should believe only in a God who knows how to dance.”

— Henri Matisse

“Celebrate what you want to see more of.”

— Tom Peters

“The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate.”

— Oprah Winfrey

“If I need a cause for celebration or a comfort I can use to ease my mind, I rely on my imaginations and I dream of an imaginary time.”

— Billy Joel

From Byrd Baylor’s I’m in Charge of Celebrations:

I’m the one in charge of celebrations...

I put myself in charge. I choose my own.

Last year I gave myself one hundred and eight celebrations – besides the ones they close school for...

I’m very choosy... It has to be something I plan to remember the rest of my life.

You can tell what’s worth a celebration because your heart will POUND and you’ll feel like you’re standing on top of a mountain and you’ll catch your breath like you were breathing some new kind of air.

Otherwise, I count it just an average day...

### **Questions:**

See the list on the last page.

Participants are welcome to respond to one, all or any of the questions. And if none of these questions speaks to an individual’s experience, he or she is welcome to create their own question and respond to that.

### **B. Silence for Reflection/Writing/Drawing: 10 mins.**

Invite the group into 5-10 minutes of silence during which time they are asked to reflect on the questions. Participants are invited to use this time for writing and/or drawing their responses if they wish. Coaches might wish to remind people that the skill of their artwork is not the issue here. They may or may not wish to share their drawings with the group.

### **3. Sharing: 40 mins.**

Coaches invite each person to share his or her response, taking a turn as each feels moved rather than in a clockwise fashion. Give each person an equal amount of time to share. If there is time after each person has shared and very brief comments or responses have been given, invite people into a more free-flowing discussion of the theme.

### **4. Check out: 10 mins.**

Encourage participants to check out with a final thought or reflection on celebration and how having shared and listened about this might impact their lives in the days ahead.

**5. Time to Say Good Bye: 10 mins.**

Invite each person to speak to what the group has been like for them, to offer thanks to other members for particular wisdom or stories and to reflect on what they are taking with them from this experience.

**6. Closing words & Extinguish the chalice: 2 mins.**

From Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*

I CELEBRATE myself;  
And what I assume you shall assume;  
For every atom belonging to me, as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my Soul  
I lean and loafe at my ease, observing a blade of summer grass.  
The atmosphere is not a perfume- it has no taste of the distillation-it is odorless;  
It is for my mouth forever – I am in love with it;  
I will go to the bank by the wood, and become undisguised and naked;  
I am mad for it to be in contact with me,

**7. Blessing: 1 min.**

May the efforts we have made here today  
To listen with caring and compassion  
Sustain us in the days ahead  
May these efforts bring peace into our lives  
And into the lives of all those whom we touch.  
May love surround us  
May joy gladden us  
May peace lie deep within  
May our lives, and the lives of all those we love  
Go well.

and/or

As you go remember always to breathe deeply, walk deliberately, listen carefully, love constantly, live intentionally, keeping your heart and eyes open, grasping and savoring the moments as they float by like clouds. Go now in peace and celebration.

## Questions for Reflection: Celebration

*You are welcome to respond to one, all or any of the questions. And if none of these questions speaks to your experience, please create your own question and respond to that.*

Do you think Byrd Baylor's hyperbole in I'm in Charge of Celebrations is a device of fiction, OR  
have you actually enjoyed such days as make your heart **pound** and make you feel that you are breathing some new kind of air ? When have you had this sort of experience?

What is it that makes a day or a moment worthy of celebration for you?

Do you have days particular to you and your own life experience that you celebrate?

What about the holidays that ARE on the calendar- which ones do you especially choose to celebrate? Why? And how do you make that celebration your own?

Thoreau says he strives to "...live deep and suck out all the marrow of life." What practices do you have for living deeply or in the moment and celebrating your own experiences?