

Notes to the Leader for Session 6 – A Gift of Change

Timing

The content of this session is closely related to the holidays; you might say it bridges Christmas and New Year's. It's intended to be used around the third week of December and the Advent ritual in the opening includes three candles in recognition of this time.

Session Preparation

The depth of this session will be enhanced with preparation. So please distribute the preparation for this session at the end of the prior session. Have extra copies available at the gathering in case people forget their copies.

Other things you'll need for this session:

- For the opening ritual, please put four candles in a ring on a center table (though you will only light three). This takes the place of the usual chalice lighting. Select readers and candle lighters for the opening words before the session starts.
- Please have a box of tissues handy because thinking about holidays sometimes brings our emotions to the surface. (It's a good idea to have a box available at all SGM gatherings.)

Preliminaries

"Group Calendar" -- During the "Preliminaries" section this week, please take a few minutes to go over the meeting calendar for the next quarter, if your group hasn't done so already. You might also remind the group about upcoming church events during the holiday season.

Reading Around the Circle

This session has the group "read around the circle." Each person who is comfortable reading reads one paragraph, and then the next person reads the next paragraph, and so on. It is important that group members know that it is perfectly OK to pass on this. You might even ask for volunteers to read before the start of the session.

A Time to Listen

This session has the potential to touch some very sensitive spots for some people. Though the spirit of the session is quite positive, some people may experience intense emotions that are either "positive" or "negative." The purpose of the session is not to force or argue people into any particular perspective, but to offer the opportunity to open up to new possibilities in their lives. The most important thing each group member can do in this session is to become aware of his or her own life path as it is reflected in the holiday experience. The most important thing the group can do is to listen to each person intently. The most important thing you can do as a leader is to model careful self-searching and deep listening.

Singing

For this session, we're offering an insert with song choices. You or the group can select the song that seems to best fit the mood of the session that day.

Preparation for the Next Session

Before everyone leaves, distribute copies of the preparation for the next session.