

## Notes to the Leader for Session S71 - Day of the Dead

### Session Preparation

The depth of this session will be enhanced if each member thinks about the topic in advance. Please distribute the preparation sheet at the end of the prior session and make sure absent members receive a copy. Have extra copies available at the gathering for people who have forgotten to bring their copies.

You will be creating a special altar for this session. A table, large enough to accommodate members' photos and other small objects, covered with a cloth, should be prepared ahead of time. A cloth spread on the floor, could also be used. It is traditional to include representations of each of the four elements, which can be accomplished with a candle, a glass of water, some bread (made from the produce of the earth), and incense or colored papel picado (either of which can be moved by the wind). The water and bread also represent refreshment for the visitors after their long journey from the other side; the incense, candle and brightly colored marigolds help them find their way. You will also want to have on hand a tea light or votive for each person to light next to his/her photo.

Group members should be reminded to bring a photo and any mementos they might wish to include on the altar. There will be time for sharing food and stories during the second half of the meeting. Group members should also be invited (not required!) to bring a food or drink that was special to the person they are honoring. A small portion can be placed on the altar, and the rest can be shared in community and celebration following the session. This can be as simple as a bag of peppermints a loved one liked, or a favorite kind of tea. You and your group will need to decide whether or not to include food for this part of the ritual. You will want to discuss it briefly when you pass out the preparation. In addition, in order to allow adequate time for both the deep listening and the celebratory time, your group may want to leave out the check-in. Or, if you prefer to include it, you may ask people to check in with one sentence (unless someone is in crisis, of course).

### Sensitivity of This Topic

Please expect emotional responses. If someone seems overcome, you might gently suggest that they not feel obligated to continuing sharing, or just offer simple reinforcement and wait until they can continue speaking. Have Kleenex on hand.

### Preliminaries

Prior to beginning the session, take a few minutes to go over the announcements of church events given at the last leader meeting or from a recent church bulletin. Also, remind members of the next meeting date. Get volunteers to light the chalice, and to do the readings (one at the opening, one leading into the silence and one following the sharing). Let group members know that the closing reading will be read around the circle, following the food and storytelling.

### Timekeeping

Use this timetable as an aid to keep the gathering on track. Since there are two times of sharing built into this meeting, the check-in time could be left out. Otherwise, suggest that group members limit check-in to one sentence. If the deep listening portion goes on over the allotted time, the time for sharing food and stories can be shortened.

Preliminaries	2 minutes
Opening	1 minutes
Check-in	5 minutes
Candle-lighting	5 minutes
Silence	5 minutes
Deep listening	60 minutes
Reading	1 minute
Storytelling/food	40 minutes
<u>Closing</u>	<u>1 minute</u>
Total	approx. 120 minutes