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Spiritually Grounded Leadership Development Program Description

What

The program is a small group of people who are committed to their own spiritual growth and to providing leadership within our congregation. I facilitate a training and support group that focuses on enhancing your inner growth and incorporating leadership roles into spiritual practice.

Who

Anyone committed to her or his inner growth and to service is most welcome to apply. You don't have to be a member of the congregation at the outset as long as you become a member soon. But you must be ready to commit to your inner growth, to the other members of the group and to serving the congregation.

When

The group meets several times a month (on Wednesday evening) and all day on a Saturday every other month. Leadership commitment is for two years.

Rationale

Conventionally, spirituality has focused inward while leadership focuses outward. One is about cultivating depth of being while the other is about serving others. This distinction can be artificial and limiting. Spirituality carries us beyond our private lives into a deeper connection with all people and all beings. Effective

leaders continually develop and deepen their inner lives and resources. The Spiritually Grounded Leadership Development Program integrates spirituality and leadership.

By spirituality I mean a deepening connection with life and a dedication to seeing truth. That dedication is stronger than a commitment to maintaining a particular self-identity or role.

By leadership I mean playing a recognized role that cannot be fulfilled without others. It may be an officially recognized role, such as an elected position in the congregation. It may be an informal role, such as leading a group or organizing a project. The key is that the role brings you into significant contact with others to accomplish some end. No person or situation ever exactly fits our model of how things should be. So leadership entails both a sense of vision of where you'd like things to go and an openness to people and situations in flux.

By grounded I mean willingness to work with the everyday nitty-gritty, to hear people on their own terms and to go through personal or situational difficulties rather than trying to rise above them or work around them. When you work in a grounded manner, everything is potentially grist for the mill. "Spiritually grounded" also implies being in the world without getting lost in it. We are committed to seeking a larger, deeper perspective in all interactions.

Facets of the Program

There are several facets to the program which help us focus on your spiritual life, ways to deepen it and how leadership roles support that growth.

Support and Training Group

A major facet is a group I facilitate. It starts with our inner life.

There is a yearning in all of us. It can be strong and demanding or subtle and poignant. It seeks to connect us more deeply with life. The group provides an atmosphere supportive of following and exploring that yearning.

A variety of tools for inner investigation help bring some of our subtler and richer dimensions in life more fully into awareness. A combination of loving support and confrontation hones that awareness and integrates it into everyday life and leadership situations. Believing that we already possess all we truly need, the emphasis is not on technique but on finding the courage and/or clarity to recognize and act on the wisdom we have.

The group also explores the practical ups and downs of the leadership roles with a special emphasis on how it can deepen your life and the lives of those around you.

The group also helps shape the program itself by helping to identify needs, strategies and resources.

A more detailed description of the group experience is available.

Spiritual Practice

A daily practice of meditation, prayer or some other well-developed spiritual discipline helps you see through blind spots and discover potentials.

Mentoring

Everyone in the group is a mentor for someone in the group and is mentored by someone in the group. Some of the mentoring takes place in the group sessions in order to give support and feedback on various styles and approaches. Some of the mentoring happens outside the group.

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento

Theoretically, the program could operate in any community. The benefits of the program should be applicable to family, work or other environments.

However, for training purposes, it is practical to focus on one group. Our congregation is founded on valuing the goodness in every person, openness, curiosity, love and courage. This provides the openness to learn and explore. And there is a great variety of leadership possibilities in our religious community.

Other

Depending on your particular needs, there is other work and exploration. This could include, for example, participating in important events in congregational life, reading and study about Unitarian Universalist traditions, attending retreats or conferences outside the congregation, attending Board, Program Council or other meetings to learn more about governance structure, keeping a journal or developing other relevant skills.

Abilities and Insights

The program envisions a number of qualities, skills and insights important to spiritually grounded leaders. These include:

Spiritual Vision: Spiritually grounded people have a broad perspective on life

supported by a daily practice. They connect deeply with life. They are fiercely committed to truth and love.

Deep Seeing: Spiritual leaders are able to see the goodness in others and to compassionately see others' blind spots, weaknesses and fears. They are willing to help when appropriate and willing to let others stumble and even fail when that is for the greater good.

Emotional Intelligence: Effective leaders understand their blind spots, wounds and "shadows." Maturity is not about being free of these but understanding what they are and how to manage them. Some of our greatest gifts can be related to our weaknesses, so they seek to utilize them in an affirming way. They are both vulnerable and able to maintain good boundaries. They are able to ask for appropriate support.

Presence: Spiritually grounded people are able to be present. They can drop their ideas and perspectives and see with an open "don't know" mind. They can face life's vicissitudes with some balance, humor and lightness. They understand that real people and real situations never quite fit any model. They are able to listen deeply to others. And they are able to step forward actively and courageously when appropriate.

Flexible Leadership Styles: Effective leaders recognize their preferred leadership style and can adapt as needed. And they have ways to evaluate their effectiveness. Some situations benefit from a traditional style leader who steps out in front, articulates a vision and goals and inspires people to follow their lead. Other situations benefit from a leader who walks alongside others rather than out in front. She/he works cooperatively and shares leadership. Other situations benefit from a leader who can follow behind and offer support and facilitation that may not be seen or recognized.

Good Communication Skill: Skillful leaders can speak about difficult topics with clarity, love, candor and integrity. They are good listeners.

Grounded: Spiritually grounded leaders are in touch with their bodies – they know what they feel and appreciate their own gifts and vulnerabilities. They are willing to take emotional risks.

Unitarian Universalism: In a Unitarian Universalist congregation, a spiritually grounded leader has an appreciation for UU heritage and traditions. S/he has some wisdom about power and church dynamics. S/he has first hand experience of some of the joys and pitfalls of leading in a church setting.

I expect some of these insights and abilities describe you. You may already have strengths, gifts and experience in some of these areas, but not all of them. The program is individualized to help you focus on the areas that support you most.

Commitment

I hope the program gives you a lot. In order for this to come to fruition, it requires significant commitment from you, your colleagues in the program and me.

The support group meets several times a month (on Wednesday evening) and all day Saturday every other month. When you join the program you are asked to commit to this group for a year.

You also commit to serve in a leadership role or roles in the congregation for two years. You have great latitude in deciding what kinds of role or roles you'd like.

You maintain a daily spiritual practice. If you don't already have a practice, you should come with a

commitment to start one. Personally, I have the most experience in Buddhist meditation and can help guide in this area. But any time-tested practice that suits you is fine.

There may be outside “homework” which could include personal exercises, study, reflection, attending congregational activities and meetings or conferences.

Application to Join

If you have any questions about the program, I welcome your inquiry.

If you are interesting in joining the group, please fill out a questionnaire. Some of the essay questions are probing.

Consider them part of the program process itself.

After the questionnaire is submitted, I would like to meet with you. My hope is that together we can decide if the program is a good fit for you.

Before summer, invitations to join the group will be offered. Since the group needs to be small enough to allow personal focus, some people who would be very appropriate for the program may not be invited into group because of space limitations.

If you have any questions at any time, please feel free to contact me. I'd love to talk with you.

Doug Kraft