



## *Spiritually Grounded Leadership Group*

The Spiritually Grounded Leadership Development Program provides training and support for leadership that is grounded in spiritual practice and perspective. (A more complete description of the program is available.)

A major component of the program is a group that meets several evenings a month and all day Saturday every other month during the regular church season. For those interested in finding more details about the group process, this document describes what you might expect.

### *Every Session*

The emphasis in the group is experiential, personal and practical more than theoretical and general. We step back and get a broad spiritual view of life. And at the same time we home in on nitty-gritty obstacles that get in the way. The group is a place to explore different ways of being, take risks, develop gifts, work through difficulties, develop practical insights and bring forth the wisdom within. Toward this end:

### *Singing, Chanting, Quieting*

Most sessions begin with singing or chanting to help us settle in. Then we meditate together. I find that living the kinds of lives many of us live, it can be difficult to start off with a sitting meditation. Singing helps soften the body and release tension before meditation or prayer.

### *Check-ins*

After the meditation there is time to check in on your spiritual practice: things you've experienced, what's going well, problems that have arisen, guidance you may have for others. If you are interested in the type of Buddhist meditation I have trained in for years, this is a time when I can help you fine tune your practice.

Some evenings we do this practice check-in quickly. Other evenings we might spend more time on it.

After the practice check-in do a personal check-in: how's your life in general, your leadership work in specific, inspiration, obstacles, etc. Some evenings this personal check-in is short and focused. Other evenings it is longer and deeper.

### *Topic*

Each evening has a focus. Sometimes the focus grows out of the check-in if something comes up that needs attention or has a wider resonance. Other evenings there is a larger topic. These topics are described more below.

### *Closing*

Each evening ends with a little singing, meditation or a short ritual to bring closure.

### *Topics*

Most evenings the group focuses on a topic. There are a number that are important to spiritually grounded

leadership. These are described in the general program descriptions under "Abilities and Insights."

To give you a feel for what the group experience might be like, below are some of the specific exercises, guided meditations, listening practices, methods of inquiry, role playing, etc. that we might draw upon.

### *Perspective On Your Life*

Through guided meditation, focused deep listening, writing, contemplation and general sharing we will explore your spiritual autobiography: What experiences have shaped your life and who you see yourself to be? What are the lessons you've learned in this lifetime? What are the lessons you are learning now? What are the lessons that you may learn in the future?

What is your sense of when you may die? What do you need to do between now and then to die peacefully with a full heart? How can you prepare to die?

What is death like? We'll use a guided meditation based on the Eastern bardos and western near-death experience to explore what the actual transition out of this life might be like.

Whether you believe in rebirth or not, what might you imagine were some of the lessons you learned before being born? What lessons might you learn in a next life? Can you imagine your existence in trans-lifetime terms?

Who are you really?

### *Gifts and Vulnerabilities*

The ability to relax into a spacious sense of life can be hampered by old conditioning and their residual tensions. Even issues that have been resolved psychologically can leave subtle tensions in the body and energy field. The best way I know to loosen these up is bodywork, particularly breathing

practices like Reichian breath work. I'm trained as a bioenergetics therapist and we'll use these techniques and practices as appropriate. They can draw a large charge into the body/energy system. This highlights tensions that want to be released. If no tension is there, it expands and deepens consciousness.

Leadership positions can be highly charged. Being comfortable in high-energy situations is helpful for spiritually grounded leaders.

Our vulnerabilities are often in areas where we have particular sensitivities. Conversely, wounding can create sensitivities that we may have not had before. Our greatest gifts are often tied to our greatest vulnerabilities. Therefore as we look at residual tensions and blind spots, we'll be looking for the gifts hidden within them. And conversely, when we explore your gifts we'll look at the "shadow" side of them.

### *Deep Listening and Speaking*

We exist in a sea of relationships. Knowing oneself deeply is only one aspect of spiritually grounded leadership. Seeing and hearing others deeply is equally important.

"Sharing and witnessing" is a specific practice of deep listening and deep speaking. We'll augment this with techniques used in psychic training and channeling. We'll practice giving feedback that we may not be able to back up rationally. We'll practice finding the goodness in others so that we can share "negative" impressions helpfully.

The group environment will support taking risks in sharing subtle knowing with others, developing confidence in "reading" other people and speaking in ways that are truthful, loving, courageous and humble.

## *Leadership Roles*

Everyone in the group is in some leadership role in the congregation. In the group we share the delights and problems in your leadership. Rarely is there one right way to lead. So we share different ways each of us might approach an exciting or difficult situation. This helps us develop a variety of “leadership tools” to draw upon.

Between the relative truths of the world and absolute ineffable truth are archetypes. We may look at several archetype systems from Myers-Briggs to Native American totems identifying our personal leadership preferences along with their strengths and weaknesses.

We may also look at models and techniques of conflict resolution.

Members of the group are also leaders of the group – helping shape the direction of the program and leading some group sessions.

You also mentor one person in the group and are mentored by another. These gives us “live” material to work with in giving each other encouragement, feedback and guidance.

To ground leadership in your spiritual life, we reflect together on how leadership touches your inner life. Some of the questions we’ll continually ask each other are:

How does leadership relate to your deepest connections to life?

What kinds of charges (delight, fear, confusion, clarity, etc.) come up when you are in leadership?

There is an element of power in all relationships. Leadership roles may bring the power element to the surface. How do you relate to power in yourself? To power in others?

What kinds of projections do you elicit most often from others? What are gifts and drawbacks of these projections? How do you work with them?

What obstacles inspire you? Which ones frustrate you most easily?

When the highest best interest of the group clashes with the highest best interest of an individual in the group, what kinds of choices do you have?

How do you effectively lead someone who is smarter than you?

How do you measure your effectiveness as a leader? What’s important?

## *The Real Group Experience*

These are topics that I believe important for us to cover. Depending on the needs and talents of the group members, there are many different ways we can approach them. The group helps shape the experience and direction.

My role as facilitator is to “hold our feet to the fire” when necessary to make sure we are going for grounded depth and to provide resources and role modeling. As the group develops, I expect to participate as much as lead.