

Spiritual Gifts of Grandparenting

Workshop Model for UU Congregations

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Purpose

This workshop is for grandparents or people in grandparenting relationships (not necessarily biological or legal relationships) who want to gather to share experiences, provide mutual support and encouragement, address shared areas of concern, and reflect on the spiritual dimensions of their grandparenting relationship.

Time: 2–2 1/2 hours

Goals for Participants

- To discern and celebrate the spiritual gifts that are offered and received in the grandparent-grandchild relationship;
- To share their spirituality, faith journey, and life stories that are respectful and authentic;
- To find support and tools to help address the concerns and difficulties they encounter.

Materials and Preparation

- Beverage and snack
- Chalice, candle, and matches
- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Writing paper and pencils
- Handouts: #1 Faith Reflection, #2 Gifts from Grandparents, #3 Gifts from Grandchildren
- *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnal
- Optional Activity supplies: poster paints, brushes, water, drawing paper, and newspaper; CD of peaceful music and CD player

Notes to Leader

Within the workshop time build in a 10-minute break when appropriate and plan on after-meeting-socializing-time. Invite participants to bring with them photographs of the children with whom they are in a grandparenting relationship. Make copies of the three handouts for all participants. Decide if you will include the optional activity (**Sharing our Grandparenting Gifts**) in your session. Encourage participants to further their conversations and grandparenting support in other congregational groups and programs.

Workshop Plan

Gathering

15 minutes

Welcome each person into your opening circle. Light the chalice candle and read #661 from *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnal. Introduce yourself to the group by name and give a brief overview of the workshop. Extinguish the chalice.

Ask each participant to share the name they are called as grandparents and encourage them to talk about the significance of that name for them. For example, some grandparenting names are *Nani, Oma, Nana, Granny, Gram, Grams, Grandma, Mormor, Grampy, Pops, Opa, Grampa, Grandpa, Fafa*. What heritage or meaning does their name have to them? Affirm each participant's introduction with a collective affirmation of their grandparenting name.

Joys and Struggles

15 minutes

Ask participants to organize themselves into groups of four persons. Invite them to show their photographs and briefly describe their grandparenting context (who the children are, where they live, and so on) and the kind of relationship they have with their grandchildren.

Gather the whole group together. Ask people to share some of the joys of their grandparenting relationships and then ask them to name some of the struggles of their grandparenting relationships. Record key ideas on two sheets of newsprint under the headings ***Joys*** and ***Struggles***.

Spiritual Gifts

40 minutes

Distribute Handout #1 Faith Reflection to participants. Ask them to reflect individually on the handout. Invite them to write notes in response to one or more of the following questions:

- How have you or do you experience something of the holy through your relationship with your grandchild(ren)?
- What are some ways you live out or express your faith and love in your relationship with your grandchildren?
- How do they express or live out love in their relationship with you?

After 10 minutes ask participants to divide into small groups of three or four persons to talk about a time when they shared in some significant way in the spiritual or faith life of their grandchildren. Invite them to think of the spiritual gifts that were exchanged between grandparent and grandchild. Ask: What are some of the spiritual gifts you offer to your grandchildren? What are some of the spiritual gifts that you receive from your grandchildren? Encourage participants to share specific experiences and to keep track of the allotted 15-20 minute time frame so that everyone has a chance to share their stories.

Then distribute Handout #2 Spiritual Gifts of Grandparents and Handout #3 Spiritual Gifts of Grandchildren and ask participants to read them. Ask them to notice gifts not mentioned and to highlight the gifts that are most significant to them. Invite them to share in their small groups. After 10 minutes gather the whole group and invite each group to share one spiritual gift that they discussed.

Sharing our Grandparenting Gifts

(optional activity) 30 minutes

Set out poster paints, brushes, water, and paper on tables. Protect the working surface with newspaper. Play some peaceful background music. Invite participants to use the paints to express their feelings of the spiritual gifts given and received between grandparents and grandchildren. Give people time to relax and create whatever they like. After 10-15 minutes ask participants to choose someone to talk with. Invite dyads to talk about ideas and feelings that

occurred to them from this experience. Remind them to share only what they are comfortable sharing. They may choose to share their painting or they may decide not to share it.

Challenges and Struggles of Grandparenting

40 minutes

Post the newsprint sheets of *Joys* and *Struggles* of grandparenting from the previous activity. Take a few minutes to read through the lists and invite participants to add other concerns to the list that occur to them from their own experience. Share a grandparenting challenge or struggle you have faced with the group. Invite participants to ask questions about any item listed if the meaning is not clear to them. Your list may look something like the following:

- Geographical distance
- Different parenting/discipline styles
- Separation and divorce
- Lives too busy and hectic
- Single parents
- Generation gap – not understanding their world
- Time – theirs and ours
- Changes in society
- Differences in relationships (favoritism/special bonds with some grandchildren)
- Lack of access to grandchildren
- Religion – other religions, none, different theology
- Custody of grandchildren

With the help of the group choose four, five, or six challenges or struggles for further discussion. Form four, five, or six small groups, one to address each of the challenges selected. Ask the small groups to:

- Discuss the challenge/struggle/issue in more detail.
- Share ideas and experiences they have had in successfully addressing this challenge.
- Brainstorm resources that might be helpful.
- Record their ideas on newsprint and prepare to share them with the whole group.

After 20 minutes gather the whole group and invite each group to share their ideas. When all groups have shared, ask if there is anything we might do as a congregation or as an ongoing support group for people dealing with this challenge. Record these ideas and suggestions on newsprint.

Closing

10 minutes

Gather for a few moments of silence, inviting participants to reflect on the gifts they have given and received in this time together. Light the chalice and read #646 from *Singing the Living Tradition* hymnal. As a benediction, invite each person to share a “fragment” of the music they experienced today. Affirm their sharing and bid them farewell.