

Becoming Together

A Small Group Ministry Manual for
becoming: A Spiritual Guide for Navigating Adulthood



Created in 2017
by Rev. Annie Gonzalez Milliken
for the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries of the
Unitarian Universalist Association



Hello!

I'm glad you are interested in this small group ministry guide for the volume *becoming: A Spiritual Guide for Navigating Adulthood*, edited by Kayla Parker. This manual is designed to be used by young adults gathering in a group of 4-10 people over a specific amount of time. This might look like a campus ministry gathering each week for a semester or a young adult group gathering once a month for a year. This group might have informal leadership or a trained facilitator. It might be a covenant group made of committed participants or function as a drop-in group for those seeking spiritual sustenance.

Because this guide is based on *becoming*, you will need at least one copy of *becoming* in order to facilitate. The book is \$8.00 and can be purchased online through InSpirit at uuabookstore.org. This guide is just that – a guide. Feel free to use the parts that work and adapt or leave out the parts that don't work. If you are busy and need a small group ministry guide you can just grab and use, go for it! If you want to choose different readings, write your own questions, and switch up the formatting, that is fine too.

I hope that this guide allows you to have a meaningful and engaging small group ministry experience with minimal prep work. Our lives are full and taking some time to connect with others and reflect on important topics is vital to our spiritual well-being. May you find songs, words and questions of value on these pages that help you on your spiritual journey.

In faith.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Annie Gonzalez Milliken". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "G".

Rev. Annie Gonzalez Milliken

UUA Young Adult and Campus Ministry Associate

Flexible Format for Small Group Sessions

Opening: getting spiritually centered

- Each session will offer the possibility of a song or a reading
- You may choose to light a chalice at this time

Check in: allowing folks to settle in and be fully present

- You might like to use the same check-in question each session or mix it up
- See check-in options under Facilitator Notes

Reading: one or more readings, done out loud, to introduce the topic or theme

- Each session will offer a longer original reflection from *becoming*
- You may substitute in a different reading if you prefer

Responding to questions: each person will respond to questions without being interrupted for a set amount of time

- Each session will offer two questions focused on the theme
- You may choose to set a timer for each person or just let people speak till they are finished

Further discussion: reflecting on what others shared, or adding new thoughts

- Depending on how much time is left, you may choose to keep this part brief, with each person offering one quick thought, or you may delve into conversation

Check out: allowing folks to say a closing word

- You might like to use the same check-out question each session or mix it up
- See check-out options under Facilitator Notes

Closing: bringing the session to a ritual close

- Each session will offer the possibility of a song or a reading
- You may choose to extinguish a chalice at this time

Facilitator Notes for Each Section

Opening: Once folks are relatively settled, you can begin. Lighting a chalice (even a battery operated tea light), ringing a meditation bell, or doing some other ritual act can be helpful to mark the shift into being more present with each other. Singing can really help with centering, but can be awkward in small groups. Take a risk and try it out if you are willing! Otherwise you can use the selected reading or choose another reading. Something short is ideal for this part, around one minute or less of reading.

Check in: Many groups like to use the same check-in question each time so folks know what to expect. It's also fine to change it up. It's best to ask a specific question; open ended check-ins can take up a lot of time without much depth of sharing.

Here are some possible check-in prompts:

1. What's on your mind, how is your body feeling, and how is your spirit?
2. What's been one joy and one challenge from the past week?
3. What is one thing that is giving you life and one thing bringing you down these days?
4. What thoughts or feelings do you need to acknowledge to be more fully present in this space?

Reading: You may use the reading assigned for the session or you may choose another reading either from the same chapter of *becoming* or from some other source. For longer readings you may wish to pass the book around and have each person read one portion. You might even want to be more creative and use a song, a music video, a YouTube video or some other media as a "reading." The more vulnerable or heartfelt a reading or piece of media is, the more likely it will result in deeper sharing.

Responding to questions: Each person will have space to respond to questions without being interrupted for a set amount of time. It is also acceptable for anyone who does not wish to share to pass. You may decide to use a timer or to trust folks to share for reasonable lengths of time. You might also choose to set a timer and allow that person the entire length of time even if they seem to be done sharing before the timer goes off. This extra silence can allow the group to process their thoughts or can give that person time to come

up with something else they'd like to share.

It is recommended that you use the questions included in the session, but you can also come up with your own questions if you prefer. It is important to make sure folks are not interrupted with comments or questions while they are sharing. If anyone struggles with this part you can remind them that there will be time for discussion after the sharing.

Further discussion: This is a time for discussion and reflection on what was just shared. Folks can share in an informal, less structured manner or with more structure. If you have longer meetings with more time you might want to delve into an in-depth, free-flowing discussion during this portion. If you have lots of folks in your group or a shorter amount of time you may want to limit this part to each person sharing one reflection they had on listening to someone else's sharing. It is important to remind folks to continue to speak from their own experience and not to make assumptions about what others shared or give advice unless it was explicitly asked for.

For example, someone might say "this is how your reflection made me feel" or "my experience is very different from what you shared" or "what you said really made me think about this other thing." It would be discouraged for someone to say "you sound like this type of person when you say that" or "you're so wrong about that" or "I really think you should do this thing instead."

Check out: Check-out is a time for closing thoughts on and to gauge where people are at.

Here are some possible check-out prompts:

1. What's one word or phrase that sums up how you feel right now?
2. What's one thing you hope for yourself going forward?
3. What's one thing you learned in this time together?
4. What's one way folks in this group can support you in the coming week/month?

Closing: This is a time to bring the session to a spiritual close. As with the opening, rituals help with transitioning out of the spiritual space and back into life. Extinguishing the chalice, ringing a chime, or some other ritual act can help. Again, singing is great and can feel risky. Either use the included song or the suggested reading.

Other tips

If the group will be relatively stable and most folks intend to come regularly, make a group covenant together before you start. Talk about how you want to be together and what concrete ways you can put that into action. For more on covenanting see: <http://blueboat.blogs.uua.org/2015/02/24/3-models-for-youth-group-covenanting-and-beyond/>

If the group may vary widely over time or is designed as a drop-in activity, plan some ground rules that folks must agree to, rather than focusing on covenant.

Some questions to consider for ground rules:

- Are folks expected to arrive by a certain time? Can they join late?
- What are the confidentiality expectations for the group?
- What is the process around resolving conflicts or addressing any harm caused during the session?

Other questions to consider, for the leaders/facilitators:

- What is the process for addressing repeated violations of the ground rules/covenant or dealing with disruptive behavior?
- Whose “job” is it to address hurtful or problematic comments or behavior? Is the facilitator expected to intervene on behalf of the group?

For tips on creating an inclusive community, check out page 9 of the campus ministry handbook: http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/campus_handbook_2015.pdf

Facilitation models:

This guide is flexible and can be used by consistent leadership or with a rotating model of facilitation.

If trained facilitators or other leader(s), such as a campus minister, are consistently facilitating, those people would likely not participate in discussions. If the facilitators rotate and are peers, they may choose to participate or they may choose to focus on facilitation during that session, and join in again next session. It may be useful to have one person focus on keeping time and a different person giving instructions, doing readings, etc. Ultimately this guide is flexible and open to many types of leadership.

Session 1: Growth and Change

Opening

Song: Come, Come Whoever You Are (*becoming*, pg. 153)

Reading: “No summer ever came back, and no two summers ever were alike. Times change, and people change; and if our hearts do not change as readily, so much the worse for us.”

~Nathaniel Hawthorne (*becoming*, pg. 1)

Check in

Reading

“Trust Walk” (*becoming*, pg. 2)

Responding to questions:

What role, either positive or negative, is change and transition playing in your life right now?

In “Trust Walk” Rianna learned to adapt when she moved away from her hometown of Ann Arbor. What life experiences have taught you how to cope with change and what did you learn?

Further discussion

Check out

Closing

Song: I Know This Rose Will Open (*becoming*, pg. 162)

Reading: “Some Day” (*becoming*, pg. 4)

Session 2: Passion and Purpose

Opening

Song: Where Do We Come From (*becoming*, pg. 155)

Reading: “We are cups, constantly and quietly being filled. The trick is, knowing how to tip ourselves over and let the beautiful stuff out.”

~Ray Bradbury (*becoming*, pg. 15)

Check in

Reading

“The Road We Travel Together” (*becoming*, pg. 27)

Responding to questions:

Do you feel like you have a sense of purpose? If so, what is it and if not, what makes it challenging to figure out?

In “The Road We Travel Together,” Nic says that young adults are bombarded with expectations about how we should live our lives. What expectations do you experience from others about how you should live your life?

Further discussion

Check out

Closing

Song: Guide My Feet (*becoming*, pg. 163)

Reading: “Self Portrait” (*becoming*, pg. 24)

Session 3: Community

Opening

Song: Gathered Here (*becoming*, pg. 154)

Reading: “We are different so that we can know our need of one another, for no one is ultimately self-sufficient. The completely self-sufficient person would be subhuman.”

~Desmond Tutu (*becoming*, pg. 29)

Check in

Reading

“Show Up Hungry” (*becoming*, pg. 30)

Responding to questions:

What gifts and challenges are you experiencing from community right now?

In “Show Up Hungry” Elizabeth talks about being accepted in community even when she’s not at her best. What communities have accepted you when you were “not so shiny”? How did these communities help you learn and grow?

Further discussion

Check out

Closing

Song: Building Bridges (*becoming*, pg. 157)

Reading: from Closing Words “Take Courage friends...” (*becoming*, pg. 45)

Session 4: Roots

Opening

Song: Spirit of Life (*becoming*, pg. 152)

Reading: “We are our grandmothers’ prayers and we are our grandfathers’ dreamings, we are the breath of our ancestors, we are the spirit of God.”

~Ysaye M. Barnwell (*becoming*, pg. 52)

Check in

Reading

“What We Choose” (*becoming*, pg. 48)

Responding to questions:

What aspects of your past sustain or challenge you now?

In “What We Choose,” Andrew goes from scoffing at chosen family to understanding it in a new light. Does the idea of chosen family or of choosing new ways of being work for you and why or why not?

Further discussion

Check out

Closing

Song: Blue Boat Home (*becoming*, pg. 158)

Reading: “They Are Still With Us” (*becoming*, pg. 57)

Session 5: Family, Friends and Loves

Opening

Song: Rise Up O Flame (*becoming*, pg. 160)

Reading: “Love is knotted and gnarled, like an old tree fighting with the wind, like branches too brittle for their own good, like roots that relentlessly inform how deeply we can trust and how freely we can forgive.”

~Jan Carlsson-Bull (*becoming*, pg. 63)

Check in

Reading

“No One Tells You” (*becoming*, pg. 64)

Responding to questions:

What dynamics with family, friends and romantic partners are most challenging for you and what dynamics are most enriching?

In, “No One Tells You,” Carey talks about how his parents’ divorce caused him to question his assumptions about relationships. What events in your life have caused you to question relationships assumptions and how did that turn out?

Further discussion

Check out

Closing

Song: Meditation on Breathing (*becoming*, pg. 156)

Reading: “Friendship” (*becoming*, pg. 71)

Session 6: Identity

Opening

Song: Where Do We Come From (*becoming*, pg. 155)

Reading: “Our task is to be who we are, in every way we can be; our salvation proceeding in putting ourselves back together after each tumble.”

~Kenneth Patton (*becoming*, pg. 90)

Check in

Reading

“I Realized” (*becoming*, pg. 78)

Responding to questions:

What parts of your identity are you struggling with and what parts of your identity are you most proud of?

In “I realized,” Kayla talks about the moments when she became aware of different identities. What events made you aware of some of the identities you hold?

Further discussion

Check out

Closing

Song: Go Now In Peace (*becoming*, pg. 164)

Reading: “The Sun in Drag” (*becoming*, pg. 83)

Session 7: Lost and Found

Opening

Song: Come, Come Whoever You Are (*becoming*, pg. 153)

Reading: “Let us wash over with peace and serenity, with fierce longing for light and heart; with living strength flowing in our veins, bring ourselves into fearlessness and into trust.”

~Ma. Theresa Gustilo Gallardo (*becoming*, pg. 91)

Check in

Reading

“Losing My Religion” (*becoming*, pg. 92)

Responding to questions:

What losses are you experiencing now and what unexpected joys have you found lately?

In “Losing My Religion,” Robin talks about coming unhinged and the folks who kept her grounded in love. When have you found yourself losing it and who was there for you? What did you learn from the experience?

Further discussion

Check out

Closing

Song: I Know This Rose Will Open (*becoming*, pg. 162)

Reading: “Go Boldly” (*becoming*, pg. 99)

Session 8: Spirit of Life

Opening

Song: Spirit of Life (*becoming*, pg. 152)

Reading: “*The best form is to worship God in every form.*”

~Neem Karoli Baba (*becoming*, pg. 105)

Check in

Reading

“Where God Is” (*becoming*, pg. 117)

Responding to questions:

How is your spiritual life going these days? What are the challenges or best parts of it?

In “Where God Is,” Kenny talks about how we need to show up somewhere, to some community, when life gets hard. What communities do you turn to when you’re struggling or where might you turn in such a situation?

Further discussion

Check out

Closing

Song: Meditation on Breathing (*becoming*, pg. 156)

Reading: “Of Course” (*becoming*, pg. 115)

Session 9: Justice and Creation

Opening

Song: Rise Up O Flame (*becoming*, pg. 160)

Reading: "I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways...And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice."

~Theodore Parker (*becoming*, pg. 136)

Check in

Reading

"Re-birth" (*becoming*, pg. 122)

Responding to questions:

How are you participating in creating more wholeness in the world and what barriers do you experience to addressing injustice?

In "Re-birth" Betty Jeanne talks about how a study abroad program changed how she saw the world, and a UU gathering helped her actually do something about it. What experiences have shifted your world view and what experiences have led you to action?

Further discussion

Check out

Closing

Song: One More Step (*becoming*, pg. 161)

Reading: "Each of Us Is an Artist" (*becoming*, pg. 129)

Session 10: Hope and Praise

Opening

Song: Gathered Here (*becoming*, pg. 154)

Reading: “We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.”

~Martin Luther King Jr. (*becoming*, pg. 149)

Check in

Reading

“The 99%” (*becoming*, pg. 147)

Responding to questions:

What does hope mean to you and why do you or don't you have hope?

In “The 99%,” Annie says we must hope and celebrate in the face of brokenness and defeat. What defeats are you carrying and what are you celebrating in the face of them?

Further discussion

Check out

Closing

Song: Blue Boat Home (*becoming*, pg. 158)

Reading: “The Stars Are Dancing” (*becoming*, pg. 139)