

Spiritual Practices

Faith

Facilitator _____

Date _____

Chalice/Candle Lighting

Opening words:

In Buddhism faith is nourished by understanding. The practice of looking deeply helps you to understand better. As you understand better, your faith grows. — Thich Nhat Hanh in *Going Home*

Check-in/Sharing

Topic:

An Excerpt from *Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience* by Sharon Salzberg

Meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg melds incidents from her life and Buddhist teachings to re-imagine this important human faculty. Here she makes distinctions between beliefs and faith.

"When we hold a belief too tightly, it is often because we are afraid. We become rigid, and chastise others for believing the wrong things without really listening to what they are saying. We become defensive and resist opening our minds to new ideas or perspectives. This doesn't mean that all beliefs are accurate reflections of the truth, but it does mean that we have to look at what's motivating our defensiveness. . . .

"With their assumptions of correctness, beliefs try to make a known out of the unknown. They make presumptions about what is yet to come, how it will be, what it will mean, and how it will affect us. Faith, on the other hand, doesn't carve out reality according to our preconceptions and desires. It doesn't decide how we are going to perceive something but rather is the ability to move forward even without knowing. Faith, in contrast to belief, is not a definition of reality, not a received answer, but an active, open state that makes us willing to explore. While beliefs come to us from outside — from

another person or tradition or heritage — faith comes from within, from our active participation in the process of discovery. Writer Alan Watts summed up the difference simply and pointedly as, 'Belief clings, faith lets go.'

Questions: Talk about a time when you found the ability to move forward in your life, even without knowing what was yet to come.

Check-out/Likes and Wishes

Closing Words:

The whole future of the Earth, as of religion, seems to me to depend on the awakening of our faith in the future.

— Pierre Teilhard de Chardin quoted in **Spirit of Fire** by Ursula King

To Practice This Thought: Consider writing a personal creed. Begin by listing "Beliefs I No Longer Have" and "Beliefs I Now Have."

Group Session Plan based on resources from www.spiritualityandpractice.com