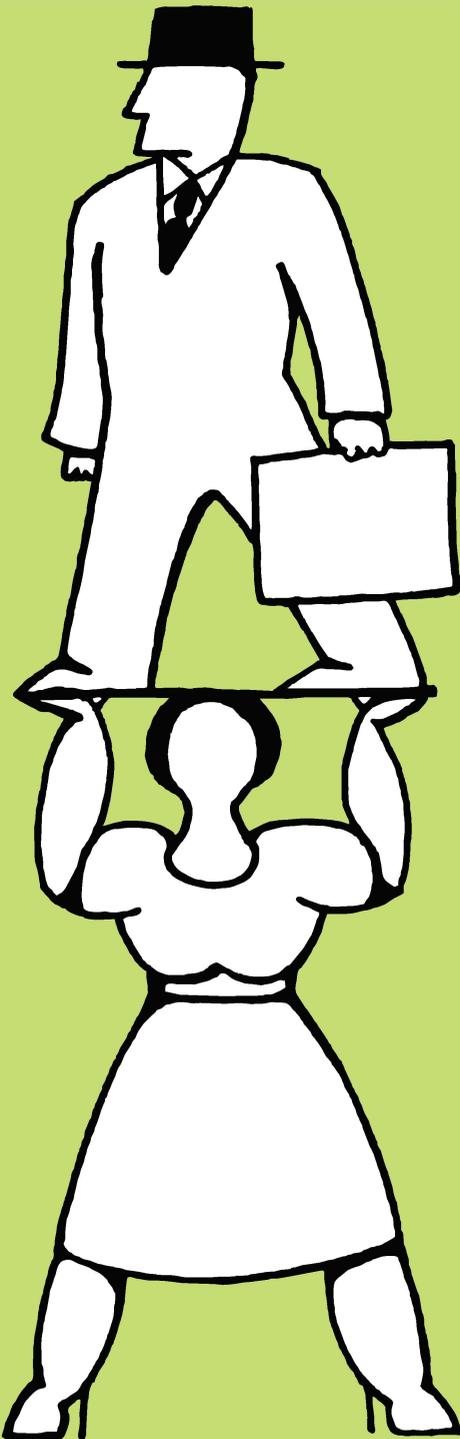


# WOMEN IN A PATRIARCHAL CULTURE:

## FRIENDSHIP, LOVE AND SPIRITUALITY



*A four-part program developed  
by the Unitarian Universalist  
Women's Federation,  
25 beacon St., Boston, MA  
02108 © 1986 \$20.00*

*Facilitator's Guide*

*Adapted by Priscilla Baird Hinckley, ED.D*

WOMEN IN PATRIARCHAL CULTURE:  
FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, AND SPIRITUALITY

A Guide With Readings for a Four-Session  
Program Developed by the Unitarian  
Universalist Women's Federation,  
25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108.  
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by Priscilla B. Hinckley, Ed.D.

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Preface

Acknowledgements

Memo to facilitators

Goals

Program needs and supplies

Session I

Session II

Session III

Session IV

ACCOMPANYING MATERIALS

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Handouts

Readings for Session I

Readings for Session II

Readings for Session III

Readings for Session IV

Bibliography

Evaluation forms for group participants

Evaluation forms for facilitators

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## PREFACE

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This program was developed at the request of a group of Unitarian Universalist women who, pained by the isolation and discrimination against lesbians within our denomination, want materials to facilitate greater understanding and sense of connectedness among women. If we take our UU principles seriously, and support the idea of the inherent value of every individual, we must make a strong effort to be inclusive within our own church family. To this end, we need to learn much more about the variety and richness of the ways women have historically related to one another, what friendship, love and spirituality mean to us in a patriarchal society and what they may mean in the future.

The author believes that one of the most difficult things to do, with the heart, is to celebrate diversity. Biologists know that species' survival is dependent on diversity. Social scientists are beginning to see that our societal survival may also depend on diversity. The more different ways of acting there are, the more adaptations can be created. Feminist theologians suggest we may be living through one of the most important periods of social change in human history. It is clear that we are called to participate in the change process, by developing an awareness of women's roles in patriarchy, the roots of today's dilemmas, and educating ourselves about the choices for the future.



MEMO TO THE FACILITATOR

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The following suggestions have emerged from the experience of others. We offer them only as guides, not knowing your level of expertise. Feel that you can invent and add to them as proves fruitful in your own experience. This program appears to be most successful for a group of 10-12 women.

1. If you offer to be the facilitator, you must be there for all four sessions. This continuity of leadership is important for participants.
2. Read through all the material carefully. Write down YOUR goals for the course. If you have questions, get them answered (library research, professional colleagues) before you begin the first session.
3. Arrange to meet in a comfortable place and arrive before the group each time so that you are sure everything is the way you want it. Learners like a certain amount of consistency so they know what to look forward to and can use their energies for the tasks at hand, not looking for chairs or waiting for the leader to find a marker.
4. Make a point of getting to know each member personally. If they are going to be late or absent, have them call you. Unexpected absences slow down group solidarity.
5. Help the group to create an environment that is safe and supportive. If women are going to share their personal experience, they need to feel others will keep this in confidence and not make judgements.
6. Make certain that everyone agrees to the way the sessions will be conducted. (see Introduction to the First Session).
7. Encourage everyone to participate. If someone (or 'ones') dominates a discussion, feel free to say, "We haven't heard from others on this. Does anyone else have something to say?" Wait a moment, and, if no one takes the bait, move on. Don't force anyone. They will speak when they are ready.
8. Keep the discussion focused on the issue at hand. If individuals start to talk about other things, remind them of the subject or task, and make a note of their concern so it can be addressed later, or privately. Notice if some group members will help you keep the focus. This should be a group responsibility, but groups will sometimes collude to avoid difficult topics.
9. Listen carefully to what is said. Don't be shy about asking for clarification. If a secondary conversation starts up, it may mean you need to ask if there is a group concern. Even a few minor words can seriously disrupt the group's concentration.

10. Even though group members may perceive you as an all-knowing leader (though you may feel differently), and turn to you frequently at the start of the program, you must encourage them to answer each other's questions when possible. They will need to build confidence in one another.

11. Monitor yourself so that you don't talk too much. Be a 'fly on the wall' and watch the group interact, contributing or guiding as you see the need.

12. If you serve refreshments, don't do so in the middle of the meeting so as to break up the flow of the conversation.

13. When you advertise to recruit, be accurate in your description of the program. It might read, "This four-session program explores women's friendships and includes lesbianism. This is a chance to talk, to learn, to share ideas and information, a place for women to examine our diversity and our commonality. Come prepared to share your feelings, and your thoughts. Mention who sponsors the series. Provide a contact telephone number and the name of the facilitator.

14. Think about follow-up if this program is successful. What local resources and groups can you recommend? Where can women go for more material? Are there actions they can take to solidify the learning?

#### WORKING WITH EMOTIONS

We recognize that some of the material covered is confusing and distressing for some. Unexpected emotions may surface. Anger may spring from unknown sources and mask pain. The difficulty in expressing a feeling can bring tears.

Members of dominant groups seldom know they wield power and they may hurt others unintentionally. It is difficult to allow ourselves to gain such insight. This has implications for dominant women (i.e. heterosexual, white).

Facilitating emotional work is shorthand for a complex process. It means:

- Noticing feelings.
- Giving yourself or another woman time and room to express these emotions. Don't hurry.
- Thinking about these emotions, what they are connected to, and why they should be present now.
- Making a decision about how to respond when participants become very emotional, a method which will work to increase the woman's power and decrease her fears. Only the woman

doing the work can say what is useful and what is not. Ask questions, check out your hunches, challenge assumptions and make suggestions. Emotional release is useful because it empowers us to know what we feel and express it. Expressing emotion allows us to think more clearly and to act.

- It is essential when doing emotional work not to confuse support for agreement. You may support a woman in her grief, fear or anger, and be critical about what she does with it.
- Challenging old assumptions about women's roles and lesbianism as well as coming to terms with our oppression as women is a difficult process. Women in this program will experience a wide range of emotional and intellectual reactions and, occasionally, there will be disagreements and conflict. Encourage participants to challenge assumptions and ideas and express fears and disagreements. This is often hard for women to do. We are taught to be polite and to ignore our emotional responses, to think someone else knows better. To change this conditioning requires both a belief that each of us has something to contribute and a willingness to take the risk to speak out.
- If the group is made up of women from diverse backgrounds, different social class, different color, mothers and non-mothers, there will be obvious differences in experience and personal perspectives. There is a danger in promoting false unity and blurring the lines by saying, "We are all women here." It is important to acknowledge that, as women, we may share a great deal, certainly we share some degree of oppression, but there are very real differences in our lives, and this provides the richness and meaning of group experience. This program is designed to help us escape the parochial limitations of our individual lives, attain more understanding of ourselves and reach out to other women for more meaningful relationships.
- Always be mindful that there may be 'closeted' lesbians in your group just as there are other differences. Respect for human difference must be continually practiced in our society. We have a tendency to make it a theoretical problem. Given our culture's homophobia, it would be a great addition to the group to have a self identified lesbian participate. Failing this, you might like to invite someone who is 'out' and is comfortable with her lesbianism, to come and share with the group, perhaps at the third meeting.

#### EDUCATION TAKES PLACE BEST IN A SETTING WHERE:

- Expectations are clarified at the beginning of the program, and participants come to agreement about how the sessions will be conducted.

- Group members feel comfortable, have a sense of mutual support, and perceive the leader as an advocate for them.
- More of our senses, rather than less, are involved in the process. Successful communication relies on getting something across in several modes. Sight, smell, sound, taste, touch and movement can all be involved. Make the learning place special. Bring a flower, light a candle, share refreshments and feel free to invent.
- Each member participates in the process. This means there must be time and space for spontaneity as well as patience and respect among the group members.
- Each individual has a sense of personal power within the group to affect the outcome of the program, that is, each woman has the power to destroy the program or help make it a success (and all the steps in between).

## PROGRAM GOALS

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To explore the subject of women within patriarchal culture and the meanings of this for friendship, love and spirituality.

To help participants articulate their feelings in these areas and to become more comfortable with them in their daily lives.

To gain a deeper understanding of our personal lives and the choices that are available to us.

To reduce homophobia thereby enabling group members to celebrate the oneness of women's community.

To have participants take part in an experiential learning process.

## PROGRAM NEEDS AND SUPPLIES

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A leader with group process skills.

A meeting place which will be available for the entire series, one that is small enough to be comfortable but large enough to allow small groups some privacy. Chairs in a circle, pillows, whatever.

A large pad of newsprint with markers, paper and pencils for each person, masking tape.

Photocopying facility to duplicate readings. The quantity may necessitate charging for the program...or having a bake sale!

Snacks and non-alcoholic beverages. One group enjoyed having Saturday breakfast together and the two-hour session afterwards.

SESSION I

"WOMEN'S FRIENDSHIP IN A PATRIARCHAL CULTURE"

GOALS

- To start building a sense of community within the group.
- To explore an overview of the subject to be covered in the program.
- To encourage participants to articulate what friendship means to them.

PREPARATIONS BEFOREHAND

- Reading by J. Raymond has been distributed at least a week before the first session.
- Participants have been asked to bring an object to share, associated with a meaningful friendship for next time.
- Table with candle or flower for focus.
- Photocopied readings for session II.
- Program goals should be printed on large newsprint and put up where they can be seen during this session.

- 
- A. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM (see enclosure) by the facilitator and discussion about goals, methodology and any house-keeping problems. (15 minutes)
- B. DISCUSSION                      large group                      (50 minutes)

It is understood that the group members have done the reading from Janice Raymond's book, A Passion for Friends. The participants create a discussion around the following questions:

- (1) According to Raymond, conventional wisdom sees women without men as essentially alone. Do you have anything in your experience that confirms/denies this?
- (2) Raymond claims that women experience a lack of Self-love under patriarchy, therefore have trouble in loving others "like their

Selves". Do you identify with her concept of Self?

- (3) Raymond describes how women can both live in this world as men have defined it while creating the world as women imagine it could be. In her view, this is possible if women can experience real friendship based on thoughtfulness, passion, wordliness, and happiness. Does this seem possible to you? Why, or why not?

C. SHARING FEELINGS - WHAT FRIENDSHIP HAS MEANT TO US (30 minutes)

- (1) If group is over seven in number, make two circles.
- (2) Go around the circle, each person sharing the object she has brought and the story about friendship that goes with it. The objects may be put on the central table if desired.

D. SUMMARY (as time allows) (15 minutes)

- (1) The facilitator invites participants to share their reactions to the first meeting and may wish to make notes for future reference.
- (2) The readings for next time are distributed.
  - a. "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth Century America", by Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, in 'Signs, Journal of Women in Culture and Society', Vol. 1, No. 1, 1975.
  - b. Quote from Adrienne Rich, found in her volume, On Lies, Secrets, and Silence, pp. 213-214.

E. CLOSURE (group may stand and hold hands for the closure) (5 minutes)

There is: a new sound  
of roaring voices in the deep  
and light-shattered rushes in the heavens;  
the mountains are coming alive,  
the fire-kindled mountains moving again  
to reshape the earth.  
It is we sleeping women  
waking up in a darkened world,  
cutting the chains from off our bodies

with our teeth, stretching our lives  
over the slow earth,  
seeing, moving, breathing in vigor  
that commands us to make all things new.

It has been said that while the women sleep  
the earth shall sleep.

But listen! We are waking up and rising,  
and soon our sister will know her strength.

The earth-moving day is here.

We women wake to move in fire.

The earth shall be remade.

sister alla

(Reprinted with permission from  
Contemplative Review, Fall, 1980)

#### INTRODUCTION FOR THE FIRST MEETING

Today we are beginning a program together called, "Women in a Patriarchal Culture: Friendship, Love and Spirituality". This is a fascinating and difficult topic. We will take a few minutes to look at the overall purposes of the program, and I will explain the format of each session. Then I will share some of the goals and expectations of the author and suggestions for attaining them.

The subject is grounded in the belief that women, through the centuries, have related to one another in a variety of complex ways in response to male domination. Unfortunately, today, women are perhaps worse off than at any other time of history. According to a United Nations Report (1980), "women constitute half the world's population, perform nearly two-thirds of its work, receive one-tenth of the world's income and own less than one-hundredth of the world's property".

In order to maintain relationships with their female friends, women have, over time, had to nurture friendships in increasingly private places. The 'kaffee-klatsche' is not insignificant in this context. As nations industrialized, women have lost traditional cooperative work groups and

the support of extended families. Childbirth is no longer an occasion for female community. Mechanized kitchens are a statement that women preparing food together is odious. Religious and secular rituals of women, unique arts and crafts, and much of whatever economic independence we had attained the world over, have disappeared. In Europe and North America, we have become more and more isolated from one another.

The purpose of this program is to help us understand how patriarchy has influenced women's friendships and aid us in clarifying new ways of relating which will be more satisfying.

This is a four-session program designed to cover sequentially: 1. "Women's Friendship in a Patriarchal Culture"; 2. "Women's Friendships Over Time"; 3. "How Patriarchy Controls Women by Proscribing and Prescribing Sexual Behavior"; and 4. "Issues of Women's Spirituality".

Each session will last two hours and will have a similar format. We will begin promptly at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock by forming a circle and focusing our energies with a short reading. We will do one small group activity and one with the entire group. We ask you to do the homework readings so that we may all share the same information for the following session's discussion. Personalized questions and experiential exercises will be used to provoke interest, participation and to increase awareness of issues. A successful group needs everyone's contributions. We meet in the healthy spirit of nonhierarchical, egalitarian group process which has been the hallmark of progressive women's groups. At the end of each meeting, we will have a formal closing consisting of a reading or a song. We can then socialize and share a snack. We should finish about \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock.

Some of the goals of this series are:

(Facilitator may write these out and leave them on the wall)

- (1) To gain insight into the various ways women have related to one another in the past and the present.
- (2) To perceive the functions of gender roles in patriarchal societies.
- (3) To clarify and articulate our feelings and beliefs about being women, Lesbian and straight, in a patriarchal culture, and what this means for female friendship.
- (4) To learn a sufficient vocabulary and relevant theory.
- (5) To develop an awareness of issues related to women's spirituality.

"We have found that the most powerful and productive workshops take place when women have the safety necessary to expose their ideas and emotions and when women have a way to constructively challenge mistakes,

ideas, behaviours, and suggest new ones. Women make dramatic changes in their lives when the problems being raised and dealt with are real ones chosen by the women themselves, and when women leave this workshop prepared to take action. But, no one will risk talking openly and honestly about their lives and ideas and feelings if they do not believe that the workshop is a safe place.

We want all of you here to agree not to talk outside of this workshop about specific information you hear about another woman's life. It is necessary for all of us to have a place to talk openly without fear of punishment or reprisal. There are very real consequences for women who are rumored to be lesbians: loss of jobs, social scorn, custody cases, verbal and physical harassment. There may also be women here who have very painful experiences they believe will be valuable information for all of us to have, yet they do not want their stories to become community gossip, taken out of context. We want to offer each of you an opportunity to discuss these experiences, with the knowledge that it remains in this room.

We encourage you to feel during this workshop. We have discovered that allowing our feelings to happen is empowering. We want you to talk about your feelings as well as your ideas. We give you plenty of opportunities for acknowledging your emotions and figuring out what ideas and experiences they are connected to, and then planning how we can together change such painful realities. We want you to come forward and tell us how you are feeling. We ask that you be prepared to work with us as we create new understandings of where those emotions come from. So, it's more than okay to be sad, to be frightened, or be angry. Sitting on any intense emotions, choking back your tears will only keep you distant and prevent you from fully participating in this process. You will not be left alone with your feelings. We have enough time and resources here to at least begin to clarify emotional responses.

We want each of you to make a commitment to stay with the group, not to get up and leave at some point. We want you to inform the group if you are having trouble, to ask for what you need to continue, or to ask for a short break if you want to get some air or to spend some time alone.

We all have a responsibility to care for each other. There is enough experience with emotional work, and enough genuine caring for the women in this room, enough time and feminist analysis to make it possible for all of us to get what we need.

Each of you knows your own limits. You will actively make choices about how much to tell us. We want to encourage you to push those limits a bit, to express more of your ideas and feelings than you normally would. You will know when you have gone far enough. We believe that our very best growth and movement takes place when we learn something new, not just with our heads, but with our guts and feelings as well." \*

DISCUSSION: How do you feel about this?

\* Hughes, N. et al., STEPPING OUT OF LINE, Press Gang Publications, Vancouver, B.C. 1984.



SESSION II

"PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN'S FRIENDSHIP"

GOALS

- To encourage participants to articulate what friendship means to them.
- To examine women's friendship from a historical perspective.
- To help participants gain insight into the political implications of gender roles.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Large newsprint, markers and tape
  - Copies of "Friendship Timeline" Exercise to distribute
  - Pencils/pens
  - Copies of readings for next time
- 

- A. OPENING - Minnie Pratt poem (see Reading for Session II)
- B. EXPERIENCES OF FRIENDSHIP (small groups 45 minutes)
- (1) If group is over seven in number, form two circles.
  - (2) Facilitator distributes the "Friendship Timelines".
  - (3) Participants are asked to fill out the forms and create a discussion around the question.
- C. DISCUSSION OF THE ASSIGNED READINGS (large group 55 minutes)
- (1) A discussion is formed in response to the following questions:
    1. Have you seen changes in the quality of women's friendships in your life time? How have they changed?
    2. Smith-Rosenberg suggests that in a "homosocial world oriented toward mutual support and commitment, ...the

social institutions surrounding them also promote a network of trust and devotion between women" enabling a wide spectrum of relationships to take place in earlier times. What rules do you feel your culture put upon you in making female friendships in your life?

3. How have class and race been involved in your friendships? How do you feel about this?

(2) Record brief summary statements of responses to each question on newsprint. (facilitator or volunteer)

E. SUMMARY (Large group - 15 minutes)

(1) Reform into large circle. Allow time for participants to look at the papers on the walls.

(2) Ask the women how they felt about this session. What do they like? What were they uncomfortable with? Do not record this, to enable a more open, spontaneous sharing.

(3) The facilitator explains assignment for the next session, distributes readings.

- "Keeping Women Down", by L. Faderman
- "Misogyny and Homophobia", by Beverly Harrison.
- "Growing Up Free", by L. Pogrebin
- "Heterosexuality: Can it be cured?"
- "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" by Audre Lorde.

F. CLOSURE (5 minutes)

SOMETIMES I WISH\*

Sometimes I wish  
My eyes hadn't been opened,  
Sometimes I wish  
I could no longer see  
All of the pain  
And the hurt and the longing  
Of my sisters and me  
As we try to be free.

Sometimes I wish  
My eyes hadn't been opened.  
Just for an hour  
How sweet it would be  
Not to be struggling,  
Not to be striving,  
But just sleep securely  
In our slavery.

But now that I've seen  
With my eyes, I can't close them.  
Because deep inside me  
Somewhere I'd still know  
The road that my sisters  
And I have to travel:  
My heart would say "Yes"  
And my feet would say "Go!"

Sometimes I wish  
My eyes hadn't been opened,  
But now that they have  
I'm determined to see  
That somehow my sisters  
And I will be one day  
The free people we were  
Created to be,  
That somehow my sisters  
And I will be one day  
The freepeople we were  
Created to be.

\* Copyright (c) 1974 by Carole Etzler from the album "Sometimes I wish", available from Sisters Unlimited, P.O. Box 826, Springfield, VT 05156.

The music is included as handout #1.

SESSION III

"HOW PATRIARCHY CONTROLS WOMEN BY PROSCRIBING AND PRESCRIBING  
SEXUAL BEHAVIOR"

GOALS

- To gain insight into how gender role stereotyping serves the needs of patriarchal society.
- Help participants clarify their feelings about patriarchy, feminism and lesbianism.
- Bring the problem of homophobia to the attention of the group.
- To appreciate how some lesbians are doing pioneering work for equality.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Newsprint and markers
  - Copies of readings for next time
- 

A. OPENING

You are what is female  
you shall be called Eve  
and what is masculine shall be called God.

And ~~from~~ from your name Eve we shall take  
the word Evil.  
And from God's, the word Good.  
Now you understand patriarchal morality.

Judy Grahn

B. FOCUS ON THE READINGS

(1 1/2 hours)

The group creates a discussion around the following questions:

- (1) Do you feel that people use guilt to control your behavior?

## WOMEN IN A PATRIARCHAL CULTURE

- (2) Have you experienced hatred of women? Please describe.
- (3) According to Beverly Harrison, traditional patriarchal societies sacralize mental activity to the detriment of physical existence. Thus, the connections between homophobia and misogyny are sustained by this anti-body, anti-sensual bias. How do you feel about this?
- (4) If we have, as Rich claims, eroticized female subordination, do you have any suggestions on how we can eroticize equality?

### C. (OPTIONAL)

If it seems valuable to spend some time on homophobia, the leader may use The Homophobia Spectrum. Just as there is a spectrum of sexual orientation between homosexual and heterosexual, there can be a spectrum in the viewing behavior of 'straight' people. Distribute forms and ask members to mark where they are now. Discuss.

### D. CLOSURE

- (1) Readings are distributed. Participants are asked to read carefully any two or more, of the following, in preparation to discuss the issue of women's spirituality:
  1. "The Spiritual Dimension", by Sally Miller Gearhart.
  2. "The Specific Feminist Theological Agenda Within Christianity", by Beverly Harrison, in Making the Connections.
  3. "Lesbianism and the Church", by Carter Heyward.
  4. "Lovingly Lesbian: Toward a Feminist Theology of Friendship", by Mary Hunt.
- (2) Participants asked to bring, if they wish, something which they consider today to be sacred, but would not have done five years ago.
- (3) "Confrontations with the Devil  
In the Name of Love"  
Judy Grahn 1978, page 147.  
(see next page)

Ah, Love, you smell of petroleum  
and overwork  
with grease on your fingernails,  
paint in your hair  
there is a pained look in your eye  
from appreciation  
you speak to me of the lilacs  
and appleblossoms we ought to have  
the banquets we should be serving,  
afterwards rubbing each other for hours  
with tenderness and genuine  
olive oil  
someday. Meantime here is your cracked plate  
with spaghetti. Wash your hands &  
touch me, praise  
my cooking. I shall praise your calluses.  
we shall dance in the kitchen  
of our imagination.

Judy Grahn



SESSION IV

"WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY"

GOALS

- Gain an appreciation of the spiritual in women's experience and the political dimension of this.
- To increase participants' understanding of patriarchy in institutional religion.
- To enable participants to learn about lesbian spirituality and its contribution to the dialogue on women's spirituality.
- To share the individual ways that we act on our own sense of women's spirituality.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Pencils/pens
- Several baskets, large
- Candle and table for it and baskets

PREPARATIONS BEFOREHAND

- Photocopy evaluation sheets for giving out at this session.
- 

A. OPENING

"Untitled" by Nancy Ore. \*

It is not enough  
said her father  
that you  
    get all A's each quarter  
    play Mozart for your kinfolk  
    win starred-firsts in contest  
you must  
come home on your wedding night.

WOMEN IN A PATRIARCHAL CULTURE

It is not enough  
said her mother  
that you  
    smile at Auntie Lockwood  
    take cookies to the neighbors  
    keep quiet while I'm napping  
you must  
cure my asthma.

It is not enough  
said her husband  
that you  
    write letters to my parents  
    fix pumpkin pie and pasty  
    forget your name was Bauer  
you must  
always  
you must  
never.

It is not enough  
said her children  
that you  
    make us female brownies  
    tend our friends and puppies  
    buy us Nike tennies

you must  
let us kill you.

It is not enough  
said her pastor  
that you  
    teach second graders  
    change cloths and candles  
    kneel prostrate at the altar  
as long as there are starving children in the world  
you must  
not eat  
without guilt.

It is not enough  
said her counselor  
that you  
    struggle with the demons  
    integrate your childhood  
    leave when time is over

you must  
stop crying  
clarify your poetic symbols  
and  
not feel  
that you are  
not enough.

I give up  
she said  
I am not enough  
and laid down  
into the deep blue pocket  
of night  
to wait  
for death.

She waited...

and  
finally  
her heart exploded  
her breathing stopped

They came with stretcher  
took her clothes off  
covered her with linen  
then went away  
and left her locked  
in deep blue pocket tomb

The voice said  
YOU ARE ENOUGH

naked  
crying  
bleeding  
nameless  
starving  
sinful  
YOU ARE ENOUGH

And the third day  
she sat up  
asked for milk and crackers  
took ritual bath with angels  
dressed herself with wings  
and flew away.

\* Nancy Ore, "Untitled", previously published in Rough Edges, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary Women's Caucus publication, May 1983. Reprinted with permission of the author.

and/or the following song of Carole Etzler, sung or spoken:

Women loving women,  
Caring about other women,  
The most beautiful sight  
I think I will ever see  
Is women loving women,  
Caring about other women,  
Loving each other,  
Helping each other to be free.  
Yeah, women loving women,  
Caring about other women  
Helping each other be  
Who we want to be.  
Women loving women  
Caring about other women.  
Oh, how I feel that  
Caring surrounding me  
From women loving women  
Caring about other women  
Loving women  
Loving women.

B. FILLING THE SACRED BASKET (30 minutes)

- (1) Form groups of about five persons each, or remain in one group.
- (2) Sit in a circle around a basket.
- (3) Facilitator speaks:
  - Patriarchal religions consider the spirit (up there) superior to the material (down here). As women, our lives are concerned with the here and now - both the ideas and the reality of production, cultivations, birth, nurturing and care of the world. Women are beginning to understand that there are spiritual dimensions to our lives; to the ways we give birth, design the spaces that our minds grow in; experience friendship, engage and dissolve unions; live through trauma; survive with respect, and all the rest.
  - As we go around the circle, put something in the basket (figuratively or literally) which today you would call sacred, or spiritual, which you would not have done five years ago. Tell the group about it, if you wish. This is not a time for discussion. Each person speaks, and others listen.

## WOMEN IN A PATRIARCHAL CULTURE

(4) The baskets should then be put on a table with the candle.

- The facilitator may say something like, "May our awareness of the spiritual in our lives increase so that we may walk in the sunlight with pride in our lives and in our relationships".

### C. FOCUS ON THE READINGS (45 minutes)

- (1) Form into one large group.
- (2) Develop a discussion around responses to the following:
  1. Can you accept M. Hunt's definition of lesbian?  
Can you see yourself on a lesbian-straight continuum?
  2. According to Gearhart, there is a danger in struggling only for our personal growth or nuclear family. Feminist spirituality involves a collective quality. Do you agree?
  3. How do we deal individually with the cultural backlash against feminism in our lives? What does this mean for our own religious and spiritual lives?

### D. SUMMARY (30 minutes)

- (1) The facilitator invites the participants to share their reactions to this session, by mentioning new learning, misunderstandings, disagreements, as well as what has been particularly rewarding.
- (2) The facilitator asks participants to fill out the Evaluation sheets which are now distributed with black ink pens. This may take about ten minutes.
- (3) Collect the sheets. Facilitator asks the group if anyone wants to express ideas or feelings about the overall program.

### E. CLOSURE (10 minutes)

The group moves into a circle, holding hands. The facilitator asks each person to say a word which characterizes how they feel about the program. Then "We are Dancing Sarah's Circle" is sung. (words below) After this, the candle is extinguished. Then, to refreshments!

CLOSURE FOR SESSION IV

WE ARE DANCING SARAH'S CIRCLE \*

We are dancing Sarah's circle  
We are dancing Sarah's circle  
We are dancing Sarah's circle  
Sisters one and all.

Here we come for friendship's sake  
Here we come for friendship's sake  
Here we come for friendship's sake  
Sisters one and all.

Women join we now together  
Women join we now together  
Women join we now together  
Sisters one and all.

Mothers, sisters, daughters all  
Mothers, sisters, daughters all  
Mothers, sisters, daughters all  
'N Sarah's circle now.

We are dancing Sarah's circle  
We are dancing Sarah's circle  
We are dancing Sarah's circle  
Sisters one and all.

\* Adapted from Carole Etzler Eagleheart.  
To the music of "We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder"