

Small Group Ministry Facilitator Training Manual

Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane

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Also in this Binder:

1. In the Rings after the Items Above
 - o "Getting Acquainted" Topic for your first SGM meeting
 - o Topics for SGM Meetings
2. Contents of pocket in front of binder
 - o Welcome letter from SGM Steering Committee
 - o Small Group Ministry Facilitator Training Agenda
 - o Contact List of SGM Facilitators and Steering Committee 2011-2012 and resources
 - o List of your SGM group members with contact information and day and time slot of the meeting
3. Contents of pocket in back of binder
 - o SGM brochure
 - o Blank sheets of paper (for taking notes)
 - o Registration Form
 - o Small Group Ministry at the UU Church of Spokane

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What is Small Group Ministry?

According to the UUA, Small Group Ministry (SGM) is a structured program within the UU church community; over 60% of UU congregations have small group ministry in place or are actively beginning a program.

What is Small Group Ministry About? Ministry Groups help create a vibrant and vital religious community by providing resources in these four areas:

1. **Worship.** Worship is central to the life of our congregation. Small Group Ministry is meant to augment and strengthen that shared experience.
2. **Community.** Small Group Ministry meets the need for connection and intimacy that is both a deep hunger in our society and essential to the ongoing life of a religious community. Participants have established new and deeper connections with one another.
3. **Learning.** People come to the church seeking spiritual growth, seeking to know themselves better, to grow into their understanding of the world and to ponder the age-old questions of faith: how to live, what to believe, how to act, what meanings we can decipher from the mystery of life.
4. **Service.** A life of faith is a life of service. As human beings, we seek to be of use and a healthy congregation needs to provide avenues through which we may serve.

SGMs have a standard format, listed in summary here and in detail under the Lets Get Started! section. Facilitators will help guide their group using this format.

Summary of SGM Meeting Format

- Light the Candle / Ring Chimes & remind group of privacy policy
- Check-in: Each person is asked to share how s/he is feeling (mind/body/spirit)
- Food (optional): now is a good time for a snack
- Opening: Each meeting will start with a relevant reading.
- Meeting theme: Readings, questions, and sharing with one another about how the topic relates to each person's individual journey.
- Likes and wishes/check-out: Each person shares a word or phrase on how s/he is now feeling.
- Closing: Reading, poem or song
- Extinguish the Candle / Ring Chimes
- Group Business: Confirm next month's topic and meeting location

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More Information About Small Group Ministry

Members of a Small Group Ministry get to know one another by participating together in discussions of topics of universal human significance. The spirit of community that develops in such a group radiates outward, increasing the members' connection to UUUCS as a whole. This purpose motivates everything about SGMs: the size of the groups; the structure of the program; the form of the meetings; the topics discussed; and the ground rules, or covenant, each group agrees to.

A few things that SGMs are NOT

They are not a debate society or a study group. The point is not to convert other people to your opinion or to impress them with your intelligence and knowledge, but to speak your truth so that others can know you, and to listen to others speak their truth so that you can know them.

The topics are not ends in themselves. We don't talk about, say, community or forgiveness because we want everyone to become experts in community or forgiveness. (Although that would also be OK!) The topics are means to the end of getting to know each other. By watching and listening to each other grapple with the topics, the participants learn about each other in a different way than they would by serving on a committee or meeting at a purely social event.

They are not therapy. The point is to get to know one another, not to solve each other's problems or give each other advice. People get to know each other not by confessing their deepest darkest secrets, but by participating together in discussion and sharing. The topics are intended to focus the group's attention on the experiences we have in common just by being human.

SGM groups are not affinity groups. The topics do not assume any shared special interests or experiences. But everyone was born and everyone will die. Everyone has successes and failures, loves and losses. Everyone has the same fundamental needs and the same basic emotions. Just being human gives us a great deal to talk about.

Finally, the purpose of a small group is not to replace UUUCS's other activities or to cut group members off from the rest of the congregation, but to draw them further in. Many other UU churches have found that the Small Group Ministry program does not exhaust the participants' appetite for community, but whets it. Having discovered how much common humanity they share with an apparently random group of parishioners, participants often become more curious about the rest of the congregation. Having been listened to, accepted, and treated with respect in one church activity, they may feel encouraged to try others.

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UUCS Mission Statement and Covenant

Our Mission — to create an inspiring and nourishing liberal religious home. In the wider world, we champion justice, diversity, and environmental stewardship

Our Covenant Statement reflects our promise to support and care for one another, embrace diversity of persons and spiritual paths, search for truth and understanding, and work for social justice and environmental stewardship.

With this covenant, we honor each other with our laughter and tears, our compassion and respect. We are a community of open hearts, open minds, and open hands.

Small Group Ministry General Policies

This is how we agree to act with one another.

Respect, Consideration, and Support

Begin and end on time.

Have a strong commitment to attend every session.

Let the facilitator know when you will not attend.

Practice respectful listening and sharing of “air time”, with listening to each person’s check in and sharing of the topic without interruption or cross talk (silent empathy).

The facilitator and group members will call the group back to the covenant when needed.

Respect the right to pass. A person may choose to talk later, or to sit/share in silence.

Empathy and Understanding

Speak from personal experience and use “I” statements.

Refrain from giving advice or trying to fix problems (yours or someone else’s).

Trust and Safety

Confidentiality: keep what is shared in the group within the group. The facilitator is considered to be a “mandatory reporter” to appropriate authorities for suspected abuse or neglect of vulnerable people, or other risks for people’s safety. Follow the meeting format. It provides a safe and predictable environment.

Learning and Contribution

Remember we are all learners and teachers.

From the group to the church

Respect, Consideration, and Support

Affirm and promote the principles of the UUA and the UUCS mission statement.

Do a service project for the church or larger community.

From the church to the group

Nurturance and Support

Provide the organizational and logistical support to maintain the Small Group Ministry program.

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Small Group Ministry at the UU Church of Spokane

A Small Group Ministry (SGM) meets monthly to discuss a topic that fosters spiritual exploration and search for meaning. SGM is **not** a study group, a committee, a therapy group, a debate society, a general discussion group, or an affinity group based on a specific area of interest. Its purpose is not to solve a problem. All opinions are welcome.

SGMs are common in our faith and we encourage you to check out the information provided at www.smallgroupministry.net.

SGM nuts and bolts

- Group size is 6-10 people.
- SGMs are open to all members and friends of the church.
- SGMs meet for 2-3 hours each month.
- Facilitators are trained annually to lead in an environment of open exchange & kindness.
- The covenant will include elements such as agreements of respect and privacy, attendance, and how we treat one another.
- Each group does a service project for the church or the larger community.
- SGM replaces Web Weavers in our church but does not dismantle existing WW groups.

Meeting format

- Light the Candle / Ring Chimes & remind group of privacy policy
- Check-in: Each person is asked to share how s/he is feeling (mind/body/spirit)
- Food (optional): now is a good time for a snack
- Opening: Each meeting will start with a relevant reading.
- Meeting theme: Readings, questions, and sharing with one another about how the topic relates to each person's individual journey.
- Likes and wishes/check-out: Each person shares a word or phrase on how s/he is now feeling.
- Closing: Reading, poem or song
- Extinguish the Candle / Ring Chimes
- Group Business: Confirm next month's topic and meeting location

Choosing Topics

Many SGM groups cover the same topic as one another each month. Because UUCS has had such active Web Weaver groups who have shown that self-direction works well with our congregation, topics will not be set. Your group leader will have access to the several sources of topics and we encourage your SGM to choose among them. If your SGM creates a new topic, please follow the format and submit it back to the SGM team so that others may add it to their choice of topics.

Changing Groups

We will create new SGM groups each Fall directly after the new member class. Mixing existing members with new members strengthens our church so we encourage existing SGM members to offer to lead new groups and for existing groups to feel comfortable in disbanding and reforming. This is not required. If your SGM has become a social group please schedule those sessions more informally and have your members join other SGMs to further their spiritual quest.

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Criteria for Choosing Small Group Ministry Facilitators

Facilitators are the heart of this sharing of our ministry

With input and insight from the minister and the SGM Steering Committee, facilitators have been chosen who:

- are trusted members of the congregation
- are clear about their role as sharers in the ministry of the church
- agree to participate in annual facilitator meetings
- understand the importance of appropriate confidentiality
- understand the difference between a class and a covenanted group
- will follow the simple structure of Small Group Ministry
- are aware of the difference between leading a meeting and facilitating a meeting.

The kind of people we've looked for as facilitators expect to listen a lot and talk only a little!

Facilitator Fundamental Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the facilitator is to oversee the structure of their Small Group Ministry:

- Set the meeting time
- Keep the discussion on track
- Model good listening skills and inclusion of every one in discussion
- Focus on process rather than outcome
- Identify and handle awkward situations
- Help the group maintain the covenant they have made to each other and the church.

Each facilitator is appointed and trained by the minister and the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee and each is expected to

- Participate in the training
- Attend the Small Group Ministry Facilitator Group
- Follow the Small Group Ministry format
- Commit to facilitate (or co-facilitate) their group for the specified number of sessions.

Group Members Roles and Responsibilities

The role of group members is to care for the well being of the group by attending to its primary purposes: the building of community, spiritual growth, and service.

Group members' responsibilities include:

- Attending all meetings unless illness, family, or other situation prevents
- If absence or lateness is unavoidable, letting facilitator know in advance
- Offering support to group members if welcomed and appropriate
- Keeping the group covenant.

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Host Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the host(s)

- provide a place for the group's meeting
- provide clear and concise directions to the meeting place
- provide chairs or other appropriate seating for members
- provide water, but not food

The host for a SGM may vary from month-to-month or remain the same. If the SGM is meeting at the UUCS, the host should arrive early and set up the space.

Minister & SGM Steering Committee Roles and Responsibilities

The minister and the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee will choose and train the facilitators.

The Steering Committee will meet regularly to support the program and help in planning and act as mentors for the facilitators as needed.

The Steering Committee will

- meet each fall to organize
- solicit SGM group members (not steering committee)
- sort these members based on their preferences and needs
- select and train facilitators
- be available when facilitators have questions
- track and update Topics
- ensure that data is available on uuspokane.org for the SGMs to access
- assist in the choosing of Service Projects when help is needed
- will compile a list of Service Projects for others to utilize
- survey all SGM facilitators and members annually to tweak the program to fit our congregation

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Let's Get Started! A Checklist for the Facilitator

Your group information will include each person's name, phone numbers, e-mail (if present), street address, and special needs. We will indicate who has offered to be a host, and may suggest a good home to line up first. A group may have several offers of meeting places, but usually it works best to have a primary place and a second as back up. Another option for meeting location is to meet in a room at church if needed for accessibility or other reasons.

Here's a suggested check list:

Decide on your first meeting date. You'll need to look ahead at your calendar and aim for a schedule that works best for you. Set the meeting dates for your group through all 10 monthly sessions. Of course there will be sessions that people will occasionally miss. The group does have the option to reschedule a meeting date if agreed to by the group members.

Find your first host. Be sure that s/he has enough chairs or appropriate seating for the number of people in the group. Assure the host that s/he does not need to prepare refreshments. Get really clear directions to his/her home so you can tell the others as you call them. Ask the host if you can give his/her phone number and e-mail address to other group members in case they need more directions. You may want to line up a back up host, but it will probably work best if the groups meet at the same place each time.

Call each member of the group. Introduce yourself, and warmly invite him/her to the first gathering of the Small Group Ministry. Encourage people to come to the first meeting and let them know that the group plans to begin on time. Get confirmation that each does indeed want to be in the group. Discourage changes since it is very difficult to reassign people. *Please let the steering committee chair know if there is anyone on your list that you would be uncomfortable working with.* No need to explain. Just don't call that person. Call or e-mail the Steering Committee chair and we'll attempt to find another group for the person. Some folks may have changed schedules.

If someone withdraws from your group please let the SGM Steering Committee chair know. It opens up a space for others.

Briefly clarify the expectation that the group will begin and end on time. Give them your phone number/e-mail address in case they have questions, and let them know it is very helpful for them to contact you if they're unavailable to make a meeting, so that you and the group won't worry about them.

Determine if each person prefers e-mail or telephone contact from you. Reminder emails or calls are usually appreciated.

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At the First Meeting

Meeting Format Summary

- Light the Candle / Ring Chimes
- Check-in
- Food (optional)
- Opening
- Meeting Topic
- Likes and wishes
- Closing
- Extinguish the Candle / Ring Chimes
- Group Business

Meeting Format Detailed

- Chalice/candle lighting or sound a chime & a Moment of Silence (1-3 minutes) This will help center your group
- Opening Words from the chosen topic of the evening – may do after check-in if this works better for your group
- Check-in. Participants share brief news of what has been happening in their lives. Each group develops its own customs as to the length of sharing. This portion of the meeting may expand from time to time if circumstances call for it. Helpful lead-ins are: “What is most on your mind today?” “What do you need to share to be fully present to the group?” “Share something that has happened to you since we last met that is significant to you.” Or use “Mind/Body/Soul” check in.
- Meeting Topic. One or more brief readings start the topic. Questions are asked with the intent of eliciting significant reflection and thoughtful sharing. Each person has an uninterrupted time to share what comes up for him/her in response to the readings and questions. There can be time for discussion after all have shared if the group wishes. You may wish to have a talking stick of some sort to remind the group who is speaking.
- Likes /Wishes. Each person briefly states what they are feeling as the meeting draws to a close. Likes (celebrations, gratitude, appreciations for needs met) and Wishes (mourning, requests, acknowledgements of needs not met) – *this is about the topic/meeting, not life in general*
- Closing Words from the Topic (poem, quotation, etc)
 - We share our thoughts, our experiences, our lives.*
 - We build connections and community*
 - We grow.*
 - May we remain together in spirit*
 - May that spirit give us the courage to reach out, fully aware that we are all in this together.*
- Extinguish the chalice/candle or sound a chime (and other possible closing ritual if the group chooses including songs or group hug).
- Group Business. This may include: service projects; selection of the next topic, date, time, and location of next meeting; other.
 - At the first meeting determine if members would like to receive the topics for the next sessions in advance of the group times, and if so, how to best receive the information.
 - At the first meeting ask if it is okay to share contact information with group members. If okay, arrange to provide a contact list to each group member.

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Optional Meeting Strategies

- Use a “talking stick or object” to indicate who is talking and when the person is finished.
- Indicate when one is done talking, such as with a gesture or a phrase “I am finished”.
- For time management consider having a clock visible to the person speaking for self-monitoring of time, or have a timekeeper or use a timer to indicate when the allotted time for a person’s sharing is reached.
- Save time for response and dialog after all have shared.
- Consider the option of having a time of silence, perhaps up to 30 seconds or so, after each person has shared to allow for reflection, and to allow people to think about comments or questions they may want to bring up during the open discussion after all have shared.

About Service Projects

Service projects connect us to the congregation and/or to the larger community. They give us an opportunity to put our faith into action. Working together strengthens bonds among group members, lets us get to know each other in a different way, and gives us the satisfaction of making a contribution together. And it’s fun!

Odd and Ends about Service Projects

- The requirement for a service project is clearly stated in the registration form and should be talked about as early as Session 1.
- If group members are resistant, explore their resistance with them.
- The facilitator is not responsible for the service project idea or organization.
- If your SGM group decides to collect money or items (books, art supplies, coats, etc.) from the congregation for their service project please attempt to co-ordinate the scheduling by discussing the potential dates of the collection with the chair of the SGM steering committee, with the intent of having one collection at a time, if possible.
- UUCS is not in a position to give individuals receipts for donations to outside agencies. If a receipt is needed, it must come directly from the outside agency.
- Encourage the group to choose a project that is DO-ABLE.
- Projects can be at UUCS or in the community

Examples of Service Projects (look for more ideas online at uuspokane.org)

- Help set up and clean up for an event
- Show up together for a church work day
- Help out at a New Member reception or dinner
- Sponsor a Coffee House evening
- Organize the reception after a memorial service
- Volunteer to help with a task force fundraising event
- Staff a soup kitchen / Help deliver Meals on Wheels
- Volunteer at a homeless shelter or warming center
- Join a neighborhood work day or a Habitat for Humanity project
- Sponsor a collection of non-perishable goods for a food bank
- Collect and deliver children’s books to a homeless shelter
- Call blood-drive donors for the Red Cross
- Volunteer with a literacy program
- Adopt a park or sidewalk and keep it clean for a designated period of time

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Small Group Ministry Facilitator Tips

1. A few days prior to each meeting, send out an email reminder or call to remind members of the date, time, and place of the meeting, the topic for the session, and, if desired, the questions. You can direct them to the UUCS website, also.
2. Arrive at least 10-15 minutes prior to each meeting to allow time for you to get settled, have handouts ready, review the agenda and topic and covenant, and to greet each member as they arrive. This also gives you a moment to thank the host.
3. Possible helpful strategies during the meeting, if needed.
 - Review parts of the covenant, process, and agenda, if necessary to help the group get focused, especially if there have been challenges in the past.
 - If you have found that members take too much time for check-in or use it to explain some position vs. experience, take a moment before starting to review what the check-in is for and model it by being the first to check-in.
 - Consider having each person read a portion of the opening words, readings, and questions so everyone has an opportunity to get involved and be heard.
 - Be aware of both verbal and nonverbal communication of members. Sometimes it is not what is said, but how it is said that is revealing. Also note what is happening during silence, observing body language and facial expressions.
4. If you have a concern about a member try to check-in with that person privately as soon after the meeting as possible to check your perceptions. Seek assistance from a SGM Steering Committee member or the minister if necessary.
5. If the meeting is held at church
 - Consider parking lot safety. Encourage people to walk in pairs or groups.
 - Leave the room the way you found it, *or neater*.
 - Lock the doors (including bathrooms if they have outside doors).
 - Turn out the lights.
 - Don't hesitate to contact a member of the SGM Steering Committee or the minister if you have a question or feel uncomfortable or unsafe for any reason.

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Facilitator's Frequently Asked Questions

(Adapted from Facilitator Training and Development Manual written for the UU Small Group Ministry Network)

What if a SGM member needs help with personal, work, or relationship problems?

Bring pastoral care concerns to the Minister's and/or Pastoral Associates' attention. Calls can also be made to the Care Committee.

How will the meetings feel?

In the beginning people may be a little anxious about the group - whether they will like it, whether it will work - and they will be getting to know you and each other. The first 2-3 meetings may be a bit stressful for you. However, as the group becomes accustomed to the format and to each other, and starts to benefit from the sharing and new relationships, they usually will become more relaxed and comfortable. This is a natural process in the group's development.

What if no one speaks after a topic question is asked?

Silence is OK; it means the group is taking the opportunity to reflect on their experiences related to the question. Peter Bowden, SGM consultant, says this process may take up to 7 seconds. Learn to welcome and be comfortable with the silence; it is a gift to each other, a sacred space in time. The group will respond when they are ready. Also allow time between responses for everyone to reflect on what the last person said.

What if a member doesn't like the idea of a relational group?

When this happens, it means that the individual doesn't need what covenant groups have to offer. Suggest other group settings as you wish them well and say you'll miss them.

What if people drop out of the group?

If a group member misses a meeting without explanation, call to ask if s/he is OK and still wants to be part of the group. There may be a life event or other situation that is preventing the person from participating. If a person decides to leave the group the person may inform the group directly, in writing, or ask the facilitator to inform the group.

What about social events outside of group meetings?

Some groups meet socially in addition to SGM meetings, particularly during the summer. Such get-togethers are not necessary or essential to the groups' mission, but can provide an enjoyable and different way of being together if everyone is in agreement with the event. There is the risk, however, that some participants may feel that the original agreement of one meeting per month has not been honored by the group.

What if check-in takes up the entire time allotted for the meeting?

Occasionally a group member has important and pressing things to share and it takes longer than usual. In this case the facilitator should be sensitive to the member's need to speak and flexible enough to let his/her sharing time run its course. If this becomes the norm rather than the exception, however, the other members may become uncomfortable with the unequal use of meeting time. One solution is to pass a talking stick. Another is to agree to an approximate time limit, such as 3 or 4 minutes, for each person to check in.

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What is helpful for the facilitator to do after a participant shares a particularly sad or emotional part of their lives at check-in?

The facilitator can ask for a moment of silence before the next person checks in.

What can the facilitator do when the discussion becomes argumentative or abstract?

In either case the facilitator can remind the group of their purpose for meeting and refer to the covenant which everyone has agreed to abide by.

What if my group wants to change the format? For example, what if some group members want to substitute social activities or another common interest for the discussion of a topic related to participants' lives?

The facilitator can simply say that such a group would no longer be an SGM group. The group can withdraw from the SGM program and you can continue to facilitate or be a member of it, but it will not be part of the SGM program.

What if a member of my group makes a comment at a meeting that sounds racist or homophobic?

This is an example of a boundary issue and it is your responsibility as facilitator to help the group address it. Using "I" statements is a way to tell the member what you are hearing and avoids making an accusation. See Challenge #9 in following section "How To Handle Challenging Situations".

How To Handle Challenging Situations

(Adapted from First Unitarian Society in Newton, Massachusetts)

Most SGM groups will go smoothly because participants are there voluntarily and have a stake in the program. However, there are challenges that occasionally arise in any group process. Here are some of the most common challenges you are likely to encounter, together with some suggestions about effective ways to deal with them.

Challenge 1: Certain participants seem shy and don't say anything.

Suggested responses: Try to draw out quiet participants, but don't put them on the spot. It should always be permissible to "pass". Make eye contact, it reminds them that you'd like to hear from them. Look for non-verbal cues that may indicate they are ready to speak. Frequently, participants will feel more comfortable in later sessions of a SGM group and will join in then. Some people simply need more time or more quiet time to process their thoughts and feelings. When someone finally does chime in with a brief comment after staying long on the sidelines you can give encouragement by expressing genuine interest and saying something like, "Please tell me more." It may be helpful to talk informally with people both before and after the formal SGM session.

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Challenge 2: An aggressive or talkative person dominates the discussion or interrupts people who are speaking.

Suggested response: As the facilitator, it is your responsibility to contain and guide domineering participants. Once it becomes clear to you what this person is doing, you **MUST** intervene and set limits. If you suspect that making eye contact with this person would make her/him feel as though you are encouraging them to speak, then start by limiting your eye contact with them. Remind the group that everyone is invited to participate. “Let’s hear from some folks who haven’t had a chance to speak yet.” If necessary, you can speak to the talkative person by name, “Charlie, we’ve heard from you. Now let’s hear what some of the others have to offer.” Be careful to moderate your comments and tone of voice; you are trying to make a point without offending the dominating person.

Ask the person who constantly interrupts to please stop interrupting by saying, “Our covenant calls for us to listen without interrupting and Pat has not finished yet.” You may also need to check in with the interrupter outside of the group meeting, since speech patterns can be cultural and the interrupter may not see it as an interruption.

Here are some optional strategies to consider that may be helpful with facilitating each person being able to have a fair share of time for speaking, and for time management.

- Use a “talking stick or object” to indicate who is talking and when the person is finished.
- Indicate when one is done talking with a gesture or a phrase such as “I am finished”.
- Have a clock visible to the person speaking for self-monitoring of time, or have a timekeeper or use a timer or to indicate when the allotted time for a person’s sharing is reached.

Challenge 3: Lack of focus, not moving forward, participants wander off topic.

Suggested responses: Responding to this challenge takes judgment and intuition. It is the facilitator’s role to help move the dialogue along, but it is not always clear which way it is, or should be, going.

Keep an eye on the participants to see how engaged they are and if you are in doubt, check it out with the group. “We’re a little off topic now. How is the group feeling about this?” If only one participant goes into a lengthy digression, you may have to say, “We seem to be wandering off course and I’d like to make sure others get a chance to speak.”

Challenge 4: Someone puts forth information which you know to be false.

Suggested response: Ask, “Has anyone heard of conflicting information?” If no one offers a correction, offer one yourself. And if no one knows the facts and the point is not essential, put it aside and move on. If the point is central to the dialogue, encourage members to look up the information before the next meeting. Remind the group that even experts often disagree.

Challenge 5: Lack of interest, no excitement, and no one wants to talk; only a few people are actively participating.

Suggested response: This rarely happens in SGM groups. However, if a facilitator talks more than the group enjoys, or does not give people plenty of time to collect their thoughts and respond, members may become silent and passive. People need time to think, reflect and get ready to speak up; give it to them. Occasionally you might have lack of excitement in the topic because the group seems to be in agreement or dealing only with the surface issues of the topic. Sometimes members may not think that discussing a topic is appropriate based on something revealed during check-in. Regardless of the reason, you should check out the appearance of a lack of interest with group members by saying something like, “I’m not sensing much energy in the room for this topic. Do we want to continue with it or talk about something else?” Then be silent and wait to hear from several members, not just one. You may need to go around the whole circle in order to get a clear idea of what is going on.

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Challenge 6: Tension or open conflict in the group arises, perhaps when two participants lock horns and argue, or when one participant gets angry and confronts another.

Suggested responses: If there is tension, address it directly. Remind participants that disagreement and conflict of ideas help to clarify one's thinking. Explain that for conflict to be productive, it must be focused upon the issue, and on the legitimately different ways of viewing it. It is acceptable to challenge someone's facts, but personal attacks and challenges to personal beliefs are not acceptable. You must interrupt personal attacks, name-calling, or put-downs as soon as they occur. You will be better able to do so because of the established covenant that prohibits such behaviors and encourages tolerance for all views. Don't hesitate to appeal to the group for help: if group members bought into the covenant, they will support you. You may also need to talk one-on-one with the person who engaged in the prohibited behavior.

Challenge 7: One member engages in ax-grinding, telling negative stories about a third party of group who is not in the room.

Suggested responses: As a facilitator, it is your responsibility to contain and guide members who forget the SGM covenant and engage in questionable behaviors. You must intervene by saying something like, "I am not comfortable hearing this in this SGM setting. It sounds like something between you and someone who is not here to present their side of the story. I'm not clear how it relates to the SGM topic we are considering. If it is related, could you perhaps tell us how it is related to the topic without naming names?"

Challenge 8: People start offering unsolicited advice and trying to problem solve for a group member.

Suggested responses: As a facilitator, it is your responsibility to contain and guide members who forget the SGM covenant. You must intervene, but you must also use caution here. You may choose to say something like, "Please let me remind the group that our covenant prohibits offering unsolicited advice. Pat, if you want the group's input, let us know and you can chat with folks after the group session ends." If the issue is a cataclysmic one, the group may choose to abandon its topic time and minister to its members. Usually, however, the ministry of the group is focused on witnessing each other's spiritual growth.

Challenge 9: A member uses categorical language or engages in slurs presenting some category of people in a stereotypical way; often this can be presented under the guise of humor.

Suggested response: As facilitator, it is your responsibility to contain and guide members who engage in questionable behaviors. You must intervene by saying something like, "I am not comfortable with this sort of language (or humor). It seems to be that it is stereotyping certain people in a negative way that really is not funny to me or them. I hope you will not use it again."

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Summary of Some Aspects of Nonviolent (Compassionate) Communication (NVC)

(Need to find facilitator)

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Getting Acquainted (with facilitator directions)

(Preparation for the facilitator: Please bring the SGM training manual, a copy of the SGM pamphlet, blank paper and writing implements for each person, a copy of the list of group members with contact information, and your date book.)

Chalice or candle lighting or sound a chime (3 to 5 minutes for this and silence and opening words)
Moment of silence

Opening words

"Each of us brings a separate truth here,
We bring the truth of our own life, our own story.
We don't come as empty vessels,
But rather we come as full people, people who have our own story and our own truth. We seek
to add to our
truths and add to our stories.
This room is rich with truth, rich with experience.
All manner of people are here: needy, joyful, frightened, anxious, bored.
We all bring our truth with us.
May we all recognize the truth and the story in everyone's life.
And may we hear and honor the truths that we all bring as we gather together.
Together we have truths.
Together we have a story.
Together we are a community."

By Penny Hackett-Evans

Welcome and review of the SGM program (25 minutes)

- Hand out and review as a group the flyer Small Group Ministry From the UU Church of Spokane
- Briefly explain the training that you the facilitator attended
- Discuss format of meetings
- Remind group that this information is on the UUSpokane.org site
- Mention of the service project

Break-optional (5 min)

Check-in

up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person, without interruption: name, how long associated with Unitarian Universalism, prior SGM experience, and how you are feeling at present

(continues next page)

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Reading

We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted.

We need one another when we are in trouble and afraid.

We need one another when we are in despair, in temptation, and need to be recalled to our best selves again.

We need one another when we would accomplish some great purpose, and cannot do it alone.

We need one another in the hour of success, when we look for someone to share our triumphs.

We need one another in the hour of defeat, when with encouragement we might endure, and stand again.

We need one another when we come to die, and would have gentle hands prepare us for the journey.

All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us.

George E. Odell

Questions (*Give a piece of paper and writing implement to each person and allow a few minutes for people to make notes before sharing*)

- What would you like to share about yourself with the group, including if you wish, where you are on your life journey and what is particularly important to you at this time?
- What questions are you facing in your life?
- What do you want to get from being in the group and what do you want to offer to the group?
- Sharing (up to 3 to 6 minutes each, without interruption, depending on how many are present and the time available) If the group wishes to, there can be discussion at the end after all have shared.

Likes and Wishes

- Likes are *celebrations, gratitudes, thank you, appreciation for needs met*
- *Wishes are mournings, requests, please, acknowledgement of needs not met*
- (a few words or phrases from each who wants to share, up to 5 minutes total)
- This is to be about the topic, not life in general

Closing words

We give thanks for the gifts of each other's sharing. We say "Thank you for risking your story. Thank you for creating a place of safety. Thank you for listening with appreciation as we deepen our knowing of one another through the weeks to come." Adapted from "Gatherings" by Tony Bushman and Bill Hamilton-Holway.

Extinguish the chalice or candle or sound a chime (option of some additional closing ritual per group agreement such as holding hands, group hug, bow to each other, hum or sing, or other ritual)

Administrative matters (service project, future meeting dates and topics, etc.)

- Confirm future meeting dates, time, and place.
- Mention that topics can be found on the UUSC website: uuspokane.org
- Ask people to review the contact list for any corrections needed. If agreeable to group members arrange to provide a list of group members and their contact information to each person by handing out a list and/or sending it by e-mail or paper mail (today or at the next session).