UUCE

Small Group Ministry

FACILITATOR TRAINING MANUAL

Developed by
the UUCE Small Group Ministry steering committee
Dick Loescher, chair
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Small Group Ministry Facilitator Training Manual, revised December 7, 2013
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Small Group Ministry 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.

<u>Worship</u>. Worship is central to the life of our congregation. Small Group Ministry is meant to augment and strengthen that shared experience.

<u>Community</u>. 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.

<u>Learning</u>. 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.

<u>Service</u>. 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.

What Happens at Small Group Ministry Meetings? Participants briefly share what is going on in their lives, and share regarding a topic of spiritual or personal significance, following a particular meeting format and covenant (group agreements and guidelines).
- Chalice/candle lighting or sound a chime.
- Moment of Silence.
- Opening Words. Gather people in, help settle folks down, serve to remind participants of the special opportunity of the gathering, and often reflect the topic of the session.
- 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."
- Topic and sharing. One or more brief readings lay out 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.
- Administrative matters. This may include: service projects; reminder about the topic, date, time, and location of next meeting; other.
- Likes (celebrations, gratitudes, appreciations for needs met) and Wishes (mournings, requests, acknowledgements of needs not met)/Check-out: Each person has the opportunity to state briefly what they are feeling as the meeting draws to a close.
- Closing Words.
- Extinguish the chalice/candle or sound a chime (and other possible closing ritual if the group chooses).

Optional: review the covenant, especially around confidentiality and respectful listening without interrupting; consider a 5-minute break about ½ way through the session.

More About Small Group Ministry

Members of a Small Group Ministry get to know one another by participating together in sharing about topics of universal human significance. The spirit of community that develops in such a group radiates outward, increasing the members' connection to UUCE 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 Small Group Ministry groups are not

They are not a debate society, a discussion group, 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 also 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 UUCE's other activities or to cut group members off from the rest of the congregation, but to draw them further in. Many 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.

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
- understand the importance of appropriate confidentiality
- commit to an average of 7 to 9 hours a month in facilitating and continued training
- understand the difference between a "class" and a covenanted group
- agree to participate regularly in ongoing facilitator meetings
- covenant to 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!

Thank you!

A Few Fundamental Roles and Responsibilities

Facilitators
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.

Members
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, personal and 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.

Host
The role of the host(s) is to provide a place for the group's meeting.
The host's responsibilities include:
- providing the space
- providing chairs or other appropriate seating for members
- providing water, but not food.

Minister & Steering Committee
The role of the minister is central to the work of the Small Group Ministry Program. The minister and the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee will choose and train the facilitators and will meet regularly with 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.

When It's Time to Begin

Your group information, sorted with attention to preferred days and times, ages, gender, location, and a fair amount of magic, will include people's names, phone numbers, e-mail (if present) and street addresses, and special needs listed by the person. 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. We suggest you <u>not</u> meet in your own home unless it really is easier for you. Another option for meeting location is to meet in a room at church if needed for child care arrangements or accessibility or other reasons.

Here's a suggested checklist:
-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 sessions. It is suggested initially to schedule the meetings during the 1st and 3rd or 2nd and 4th week each month on the specified day, rather than every 2 weeks. 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. <u>Assure the host that s/he does not need to prepare refreshments</u>. 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. <u>No need to explain</u>. 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 <u>will begin and end on time</u>. 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. It is never too early to start building the covenant!

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

-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.

-Prior to or 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.

Why a Covenant?

This agreement is one of the most essential parts of this Group movement. Groups can revisit the covenant if they flounder or need to re-focus. This is how we hold each other to our religious principles, how we agree to act with one another.

UUCE Mission Statement:
Empowered by love, we transform ourselves and serve our world.

UUCE Covenant of Right Relations
We covenant to build a religious community guided by respect and sustained by our principles.

We will listen appreciatively, speak with care, express gratitude, honor our differences, and assume good intentions.

We will communicate directly, honestly and compassionately – particularly when we are in conflict.

When we hurt one another we will ask for forgiveness and make amends, and when we are hurt we will try to forgive and reconnect in a spirit of right relationship.

In celebration of the common mission that unites us, we will abide by this covenant.

(Modified by the UUCE Board on Jan. 12, 2012)

The Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association:

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Small Group Ministry Covenant of Right Relationship

Group Agreements and Guidelines to Meet Our Needs and Support Our Values

<u>Within the group</u>
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.

<u>From the group to the church</u>
Respect, Consideration, and Support
- Affirm and promote the principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the UUCE mission statement.
- Do a service project for the church or larger community.

<u>From the church to the group</u>
Nurturance and Support
- Provide the organizational and logistical support to maintain the Small Group Ministry program.

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.

Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene Small Group Ministry Program
Revised by the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee (Laura Adams; Dick Loescher, chair; Sandy Moses; Leora White) Sept. 16, 2010

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 flyer 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.
- UUCE 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 within the time frame of the SGM program, and the physical abilities and time availability of the group members.
- Information and ideas about service projects for UUCE may be obtained from these sources: the Volunteer page on the UUCE web site, the Fundraising committee, the Kitchen committee, the Membership committee, the Service in Action committee, the Director of Music, the Director of Religious Education, and possibly other church groups and program staff.
- Information about community volunteer opportunities may be obtained from United Way: www.unitedwaylane.org, 541-741-6000.

Examples of Service Projects

Be Greeters or Ushers at Sunday Services.
Be responsible for Coffee Hour for some number of Sundays.
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.
Donate a service to the annual Auction.
Organize the reception after a memorial service.
Volunteer to help with a fundraising event.
Staff a soup kitchen.
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.
Volunteer at Food for Lane County.
Collect and deliver children's books to a homeless shelter.
Call blood-drive donors for the blood bank.
Volunteer with a literacy program.

Small Group Ministry Facilitator Tips

1. A few days prior to each meeting, send out an email or paper mail 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.

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. Mention that some of the quotes used in the session plans were selected to provide a diversity of viewpoints to stimulate reflection and sharing. The quotes do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the SGM steering committee or UUCE, and selection of a quote does not imply that it necessarily is considered to be truth. Also, some quotes may contain gender or other references that were used by the author of the quote, and may not be considered to be inclusive or politically correct by contemporary standards.
    *   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 in the lot.
    *   Leave the room the way you found it, or neater.
    *   Lock the doors as appropriate.
    *   Turn out the lights.

6. Don't hesitate to contact a member of the SGM Steering Committee or the minister if you have a question, concern, or feel uncomfortable or unsafe for any reason.

Revised by the Small Group Ministry steering committee (Lyn Fischrup; Bonnie Koenig; Al Landy; Dick Loescher, chair). November 1, 2013

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?
Giving advice and trying to fix problems are not part of the SGM program. If a person is asking for help, consider sharing information after the SGM group meeting is over about possible resources at UUCE (Minister, Care Committee, other), and community resources, including 211info (www.211info.org, telephone number 211 or 866-698-6155). See also the answer to Challenge 8 on page 14.

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. On infrequent occasions it may be helpful for the facilitator to go first if no one else speaks.

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 group has not honored the original agreement of two meetings per month. If additional social events are scheduled outside of group meeting times be clear that participation is optional.

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 agree to an approximate time limit, such as 3 or 4 minutes, for each person to check in.

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.

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 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 that 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.

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 or 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 <u>after</u> 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 personal and 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."

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

Definition: a process and language of compassionate, empathic communication.

Intention: connection, the quality of which leads to everyone's needs being met peacefully; to encourage compassionate giving.

Attention: to the present; to what is alive (Observations, Feelings, Needs, Requests) in us and others now.

Components
Observations (O): what would be recorded by a video camera, separate from evaluations.
Feelings (F): emotions or body sensations that result from needs met (satisfied: calm, confident, grateful, happy, loving, and many others) or needs not met (unsatisfied: afraid, angry, confused, disappointed, unhappy, and many others).
Needs (N): life energy seeking fulfillment; what is valued; a universal quality which, when experienced, enhances life and well-being.
Requests (R): strategies to enrich the lives and meet the needs of ourselves and others.

Modes
Self-empathy (O, F, N, R).
Honest self-expression (O, F, N, R).
Empathy for others (O, F, N, R).

Some key assumptions behind NVC
All human beings have the same basic needs.
All human actions are attempts to meet needs.
People naturally enjoy contributing to others when they can do so willingly ("helper's high").

Feelings: distinguished from evaluations and thoughts.
Examples of feelings when needs are met include: affectionate, calm, comfortable, confident, engaged, excited, exhilarated, fulfilled, grateful, happy, hopeful, inspired, interested, loving, moved, peaceful, proud, refreshed, satisfied, and others.
Examples of feelings when needs are not met include: afraid, angry, annoyed, anxious, ashamed, confused, disappointed, disconnected, discouraged, embarrassed, envious, fatigue, guilty, hate, hurt, lonely, pain, repulsed, uncomfortable, unfulfilled, unhappy, unsatisfied, vulnerable, and others.
Asking about and expressing feelings: (Are you/I am) feeling _____ because (you are/I am) needing _____(?/.)

Needs
Some other words that may have a **similar meaning** to **"need"** in certain situations include: value, care about, is important to, want, wish, hope, prefer, like, yearn for, long for, desire, cherish, expect, have an interest in, have a priority for, think, and other words.
There are many different lists of needs and ways of categorizing them. For descriptive purposes it is useful to separate needs into physical well-being needs and psychological/social well-being needs, although doing so is somewhat artificial and arbitrary because there is much overlap.
Examples of physical well-being needs include: air, clothing, exercise, food, movement, protection, rest, safety, sexual expression, shelter, touch, water, and others.

Examples of psychological/social well-being needs include the following.
-Autonomy: choice, flexibility, freedom, independence, individuality, space, spontaneity, and others.
-Connection: acceptance, appreciation, belonging, communication, community, compassion, consideration, cooperation, empathy, friendship, interdependence, intimacy, love, mutuality, recognition, respect/self respect, support, understanding, and others.
-Honesty: authenticity, consistency, integrity, presence, trust, and others.
-Meaning: awareness, celebration, challenge, clarity, competence, contribution, creativity, effectiveness, efficiency, growth, learning, participation, purpose, service, stimulation, and others.
-Peace: beauty, ease, equality, harmony, hope, inspiration, order, security, stability, and others.
-Play: adventure, fun, humor, joy, laughter, recreation, and others.

Requests
It is often helpful to express O, F, and especially N prior to making a request in order to reduce the likelihood that a request will be interpreted as a demand.
Connecting requests after expressing something:
"Would you be willing to tell me
-what did you **hear** me say (checking to see if I have been understood as I would like, i.e. was the message received the same as the message sent)? "
-how you **feel** about what I said (asking for honest expression of response to what was said)?"
-what you **think** about what I said (asking for analysis of what was said)?"
Action requests:
-positively stated (what want rather than what don't want);
-doable (concrete, specific action rather than what we want the other to be);
-oriented to present time (agree to do now or agree now to do in the future).

Life alienating (disconnecting) communication: 4 Ds (diagnosis, demands, deserves, denial of responsibility). Analyses and moralistic judgments are alienated expressions of needs and values which have been met or unmet.

Jackal animal is sometimes used as a symbol of violence provocative critical, judgmental, blaming type of thinking and communicating.
Giraffe animal is sometimes used as a symbol of empathic, compassionate type thinking and communicating.

4 ways people may respond to a difficult to hear message (jackal/giraffe ears):
-blame other (jackal ears out);
-blame self (jackal ears in);
-empathy for self (giraffe ears in);
-empathy for other (giraffe ears out).

Empathy: respectful understanding of O, F, N, R in ourselves and others. Needs are the most important component. Understanding does not mean agreement or disagreement. Value of empathy: increases connection and the chance of getting everyone's needs met; may allow ability to perceive world in a new way and move on, to heal; may defuse anger (don't put "but" in face of angry person); may help people feel safer. Evidence that adequate empathy has been received: sense of release of tension; halt of flow of words.

Verbal empathy (Guessing O, F, N, R).

Nonverbal empathy (facial expression, body language, tone of voice).
Give empathy (verbal and/or nonverbal) before non-empathic response ("empathy before education", "connection before correction"). Also, consider asking permission before giving a non-empathic response such as: advising/fixing; one-upping; educating; consoling; story-telling; encouragement; sympathizing; interrogating; explaining; correcting.

Self-empathy: translate self-judgment and inner demands (should) into recognizing feelings and unmet needs. NVC mourning allows for self-forgiveness with change from feelings of shame, guilt, depression (self-punishment) and anger to feelings of sadness, frustration, disappointment, fear, grief, regret etc., which allows for creative possibilities of how to get the needs met.
When unable to empathize: Breathe; give self-empathy or get empathy from someone else; do honest self-expression (O, F, N, R); take time out.

A helpful reframe can be to translate "I have to ___" into "I choose to ___ because I want ___."

Anger: has value as a wake up call.
Causes of anger: needs not being met plus thoughts of blame and judgment.
Steps to expressing anger or responding to anger or responding to a difficult to hear (unpleasant) message using NVC model: Stop, breathe, be aware of body sensations; observe internally silently any thoughts of blame and judgment (jackal) of others and/or self ("enjoy the jackal show"); as soon as possible do self-empathy to fully connect with one's own unmet needs and the associated feelings; then do honest self-expression and empathy to other (in either order).

How to respond when someone reflects back something different from what we intended to say: express appreciation for the response; then try communicating again in the same or a different way. (Example. "Thank you for telling me what you heard me say. I was not as clear as I would have liked. I would like to try expressing myself again, and for you to try hearing me differently.")

Saying and hearing "no" in NVC: receive request as a gift; say or guess/ask what feelings and needs prevent compliance with the request (what are saying "yes" to); empathy to self or other if needed; recognize goal to get all needs met. "Behind every no is a need".

Some insights
-The NVC process is simple but not easy.
-Unexpressed anxiety may be interpreted as hostility or aggression.

Some distinctions in NVC
-Value judgment vs. moralistic (condemnatory) judgment.
-Feelings (and needs) vs. thoughts/evaluations/judgments/blame.
-Stimulus (what triggers a response) vs. cause (needs met or unmet and the associated feelings).
-Request (empathizes with "no", wants compliance only if willing) vs. demand (blame or punishment if not comply).
-Need vs. strategy (request to meet the need).
-NVC consciousness (intent) vs. NVC formula words.
-"Classical NVC (Classical Giraffe)" and "Conversational or Idiomatic NVC (Street Giraffe)".
-Natural vs. habitual.
-Empathy (focuses on what is alive in the other; understanding of the other's O, F, N, R) vs. sympathy (refers to one's own feelings, often of care or compassion or sorrow etc., rather than those of the

other).
-Intrinsic motivation (meet needs of self and others) and self-discipline vs. extrinsic motivation (guilt, shame, fear of punishment, hope for reward) and obedience.
-Interdependence and autonomy vs. dependence and independence.

NVC emphasizes and promotes
-Power with (serves life, loving) vs. power over (detracts from life, oppressive).
-Process language vs. static language.
-Goal of connection to get everyone's needs met (win/win) vs. get only what we or others want (win/lose), or what neither wants (lose/lose).
-Goal to inspire compassionate response vs. produce aggressive or resentful or indifferent response.
-Protective vs. punitive use of force.
-Gratitude and Appreciation using NVC (celebration expressing O, F, N met, which has much value and benefit to the giver and receiver) vs. praise and compliments (which may involve judgments and manipulation).

Some NVC web site resources
Center for Nonviolent Communication: www.cnvc.org
Oregon Network for Compassionate Communication: www.orncc.net
Puddle Dancer Press: www.nonviolentcommunication.com
NVC Academy: www.nvctraining.com

Some NVC related e-newsletters
Eugene NVC News. This free e-mail newsletter can be subscribed to from this web page of the Oregon Network for Compassionate Communication: www.orncc.net/community/.
NVC Quick Connect e-Newsletter. A free subscription is available from this web page of the Puddle Dancer Press: www.nonviolentcommunication.com/forms/newsletter.html.

There are many written and audio and audiovisual materials available, many of which are listed on some of the above web sites.

This summary reflects my understanding and interpretation of: NVC materials (particularly the book "Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life" 2nd edition, by Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D., and other writings and audio and audiovisual materials by him and others); various NVC workshops and their handouts; and various NVC practice groups. I view this summary to be a work in progress. It is intended to be used as a supplement to other NVC materials, and may be shared.

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**Summary of a Facilitated Conversation Process Using Nonviolent (Compassionate) Communication (NVC)
as Developed by the Committee on Congregational Ministry (COCM)
of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene (UUCE)**

This facilitated conversation process may be helpful in facilitating management of conflicts between person or group A and person or group B where there have been difficulties in communication(s), and/or working relationship(s), and/or interactions where their needs have not been met as well as they would like.

1. The goals of the facilitated conversations are: to facilitate an increase in the empathic understanding of each person or group of him/her/itself as well as of the other; and to facilitate changes in the communication(s), and/or working relationship(s), and/or interactions between person or group A and person or group B that would be more satisfying, collegial, and more effective in meeting the needs of each of them, and of groups that they both may be a part of.

2. The framework for this facilitated conversation process is to ask all of the participants to use the principles and process of Nonviolent (Compassionate) Communication (NVC) to the extent that they are able. Information about NVC may be made available to the participants.

3. The facilitator will meet with person or group A alone, and at another time with person or group B alone. Each person or group will fill out an assessment form (printed on the next page) prior to their individual meeting with the facilitator. The goals of the assessment form and the meeting with the facilitator include: to attempt to get as much clarity and understanding as possible in NVC terms of each person's observations, feelings, needs, and requests regarding the communication(s), and/or working relationship(s), and/or interactions between person or group A and person or group B; and to attempt, as best possible, to understand, imagine, and guess the other's observations, feelings, needs, and requests. Responses on these assessment forms can then be revised, if any revisions seem useful and appropriate, prior to the meeting of the facilitator with person or group A and person or group B all together.

4. A meeting of the facilitator and person or group A and person or group B all together will then be held. The format of the meeting will be similar to a Small Group Ministry or a Nonviolent Communication practice-study group meeting.
-During the meeting each person or group will have the opportunity to express their own observations, feelings, and needs, and to state their understanding of the other's observations, feelings and needs.
-When each person or group has stated an understanding of the other's needs to the satisfaction of the other then specific requests and strategies will be proposed for changes in the communication(s), and/or working relationship(s), and/or interactions between person or group A and person or group B that would be more satisfying, collegial, and more effective in meeting the needs of each and those of the groups they are both in, as best possible. The intent is to come up with specific strategies that all agree to.
-If considered to be useful and appropriate, a follow up meeting with the facilitator and person or group A and person or group B will be scheduled to review how the strategies are working, and to make follow-up plans, as appropriate.
-The facilitator will be available for listening, facilitating, and supporting as needed.

Assessment Form in Preparation for Facilitated Conversation Process

Person filling out the form _____ Date _____

Please rate your level of satisfaction based on how well your needs/values/hopes/wishes/expectations/preferences have been met using the following scale:
5 very satisfied; 4 satisfied; 3 neither satisfied nor unsatisfied; 2 unsatisfied; 1 very unsatisfied.

My level of satisfaction with the communication(s), and/or working relationship(s), and/or interactions between person or group A and person or group B is ____.

Please give examples (using observations, feelings, needs, requests) **of interactions that have worked well** (have met your needs/values/hopes/wishes/expectations/preferences and you appreciate) **and that you would like to have continued.**

Please give examples (using observations, feelings, needs, requests) **of interactions that have not worked well** (have not met your needs/values/hopes/wishes/expectations/preferences) **and what you wish would have been different to better meet your needs.**

Please indicate what you understand or imagine or guess some of the other person's or group's significant observations, feelings, needs, and requests might be.

Please list specific requests and strategies for yourself or your group and for the other person or group for changes in the communication(s), and/or working relationship(s), and/or interactions between person or group A and person or group B that you think would be more satisfying, collegial, and more effective in meeting the needs of each and those of the groups you both are part of, as best possible. [Types of requests in the NVC model include: connecting requests (Would you tell me what you heard me say? Would you tell me how you feel about what I said? Would you tell me what you think about what I said?); and action requests (positively stated-what you want rather than what you don't want; doable-concrete, clear, specific action rather than what we want the other to be; oriented to present time-agree to do now or agree now to do in the future).]

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